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WIDENER



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FROM

Col. Thomas Wentworth
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12 March 1901.

CITHARA MEA

CITHARA MEA

Poems

BY

REV. P. A. SHEEHAN

AUTHOR OF "GEOFFREY AUSTIN, STUDENT"

"THE TRIUMPH OF FAILURE"

"MY NEW CURATE," ETC.

*Ὅσια, πότνα θεῶν,
ὁσιὰ, δ', ἅ κατὰ γὰν
χρυσέαν πτέρυγα φέρεις.*

O holy, venerable goddess, holy, who trailest thy golden pinion
along the earth. — EURIP. BACCH. 370

Exurge, psalterium et cithara ; exurgam diluculo. — Ps. cvii. 2

BOSTON

MARLIER, CALLANAN, & COMPANY

1900

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THE HIDDEN

I

CITHARA MEA

THE HIDDEN

I

I POURED the healing waters on the head
Of a young child, who shuddered 'neath
the weight
And stress of life ; and then I saw the dead
Stare upwards from their tabernacles desolate.

I do not like this insolence of Death ;
They have no right to mock at us, who bear
Life's burden, and the heaving of hot breath, —
They who have cast the burden and the care.

But, oh, dear God ! what is it all? This dream
That in our slumbers shifts and alternates
Scene after scene on canvases that teem
With figures wrought by all the cunning fates,

Cithara Mea

Who, from the awful silences of skies,
The still more awful silences of graves,
Weave in their shadowy looms our destinies,
Untroubled by the tranquil Will that saves

The dreamers of the sunset and the dark.
Oh for one flash of Thy resplendent Face !
Oh for one whisper of Thy voice to mark
Assurance of Thy presence and Thy grace !

II

We know Thou 'rt round about us ; that this air
With all Thy thought-waves heaves and pal-
pitates ;
That Thy most sacred presence, and most fair,
Beholds the evolution of our fates.

But our vain senses vex us with their cry,
Importunate 'gainst whims of blinded chance,
And the wide wings of reason ache to fly,
Unhappy from their dread exorbitance —

The dread dissatisfaction Thou hast wrought
Into the folds of brain, — the sheathed soul ;
For all the calm and gentle gods of thought
Struggle for freedom from the base control

The Hidden

Of time, and sense, and space (with its vast walls
That echo not the spirit's yearnings infinite),
Wardens of iron in God's lordly halls,
Who check the daring Titan's aerial flight,

And cry : Thus far, no farther shalt thou come !
Within the Shechinah, — the presence cloud !
Only the High-Priest, Faith, sightless, dumb,
Shall lift the veil ; unwrap the secret shroud.

III

We hear the wild complaints of querulous winds,
Seeking Thee o'er the mountain and the mere, —
We watch the ponderous thunder wave that grinds
The earth in questings, impotent and drear.

We see the childlike helplessness of earth,
Its leaves and buds that grope in vain for Thee, —
For Thee, the Father of an abandoned birth,
Wondering and weak for its own mystery.

And the stripped, naked forests of the fall
Lift vainly to the sky their leprous arms,
Lazarlike, pitiful, till Thy spring recall
The spirit dead 'neath winter's wizard charms.

Cithara Mea

But mostly, he, thy manchild, cries to Thee,
He needs Thee in the storm and the shower ;
He clamors for Thy keys of mystery,
And frets for the subsidence of Thy power.

Where art Thou hidden? Whence Thy dread
eclipse?
Thy children are grown covetous of Thee ;
They clamor for Thy full apocalypse,
Thy sail of light athwart our sullen sea.

IV

And I behold Thee ; but, oh ! it is so dark,
I seem as one of blessed sense bereft ;
What touches Thy strong right hand I remark,
I see not what encompasses Thy left.

Thine awful eyebrows shadow all my path,
Questioning and challenging the sons of men,
As Thou would'st reap of life an aftermath,
Harvesting Death to sow life's seeds again.

I walk among the shadows, and am hid
In Thy vast gloom of glory cast apace ;
I lift mine weary eyes as Love doth bid,
And lo ! am lost in hiddenness of Thy Face.

The Hidden

Why wilt Thou always blind us with Thy noon?
Or make us stagger against walls of night?
Why not the pale, meek lustre of the moon?
Or pensiveness empurpled of twilight?

Lead us, and light us, O Thou Lord of Light!
Lo! in the valleys how we pause and grope;
Shall we not see Thee from th' embattled height,
Where Faith hath fields of freedom, Love hath
scope?

V

Who was the sad, despairful scribe who wrote —
A cry, a struggle, silence — this man's life?
A cry at birth, a struggle for a mote,
And then night's silence swooping on the strife.

A gleam of pallid sunshine ; and a mist
Of green ; and then the winter chalice full
Of dead leaves, stained with autumn's amethyst ;
A few babe-flow'ret faces — then a skull.

A form to make the soul of artist dream ;
A canker hidden in the soft rose-leaf ;
Eyes that are irised with the fair dawn's gleam,
Then fade to ashes of a sunset grief.

Cithara Mea

Fair marble cities, washed by fawning tides ;
Challenging Heaven with domes and minarets ;
Gray, shattered ruins, where the ichneumon hides,
And Death frames dice from ivoried castanets ;

A nebule breathed from the fire-lipped Sun ;
A bubble rainbowed with a moment's grace ;
And then another planet's brief course run —
A cinder on the hearths of boundless space.

VI

On the vast beach of Time are careless strown
Fragments untenanted by life or power ;
Shells from the Ocean, gathered here and blown
By whirlwinds of fate, — a ghastly dower.

Here is the skull of Raffaele, — a brown shell,
And brittle from the fretting of time's tides ;
And here 's the fragile and deserted cell,
The rainbow-tinted shrine of annelides.

Here dwelt the mind of magic that inwrought
Pictures to hang within the walls of heaven ;
And here the gentle hermit-soul that brought
Pearls of price from ooze and black sea-leaven.

The Hidden

Which is the greater-canvas-square that gleams
With forms that flash like angel's wings across
The artist soul, when in a night of dreams
He clasps the vision — then wakens to his loss,

Or, the voluted palace of the worm,
With all its curved arcades as finely drawn
As sea-sprung palace, fair in front and form,
And flushed by the red cressets of the dawn?

VII

I heard a sound of weeping in the night ;
I saw a form clasp to its naked breast
Something that shuddered in the cold starlight,
Another soul by weight of life opprest.

I saw a priest before Thy altar stand,
In the black midnight, pierced by one red star,
I tried to hear — to hear and understand :
He called Thee near — he called Thee as afar.

I saw a nun stare at her whitewashed wall ;
There were some blood-stains on a Form that
 hung
Insensible ; tho' bitter tears did fall
It heeded not the anguish whence they'd sprung.

Cithara Mea

And out on the far water wastes that heaved
Their wailing hands to irresponsible skies,
I heard, as tho' I dreamed, and were deceived,
Their waters close o'er man's despairing cries.

Mother and mariner, sacred nun and priest,
Called, and Thou heard'st not. Oh, the silence
 barred
'Gainst all but happiest souls by death released
Beyond those black abysses, feebly starred !

VIII

For, what is space but one vast, black abyss,
Darkened by tortured giants, blindly hurled,
Pierced here and there by some sun taper's hiss
That casts a pallid gleam on its slave-world ?

I cannot see Thee there ; for space is hell, —
Hell, with its million mills that tortured roll ;
And Time 's the warder with his clanging bell,
And suns the lamps that light man's dreadful dole.

I cannot see Thee in the dark and cold, —
Darkness of Erebus ; cold that fiercely burns,
In the black interstellar spaces rolled,
Ploughed by each cursed Enceladus that turns

The Hidden

His writhing bulk towards th' avenging gods,
His wan face lighted by a pallid beam,
Flung from the summits of the high abodes
Whence thunders issue, and the lightnings
gleam, —

Thunders, unmuffled in the sleeping void ;
Lightnings that drown themselves in seas of night ;
And Thou, who reignest over worlds destroyed,
Art cloaked and hooded in relentless light.

IX

I called unto my sleeping gods, and said :
Awake ! arise ! this is no time for rest !
The aching heavens travail above our head,
And these, our brothers, in the fatal quest,

Strain every nerve and fibre of the soul
To bridge the gulf that spans the mighty chasm ;
Leap down the valleys, climb the mountain thole,
With heaving breasts and many a dread heart-
spasm,

To find beyond the line of mountain crests
The depths of Chaos, unsurveyed, unspanned,
Beyond the billows of the cloudlets' breasts
Only the shadow of a ghostly hand,

II

Cithara Mea

That seems to beckon, seems to warn back
From dread destruction, watching for their trail,
Centred in hidden fires, in red cloud-wrack,
And all the dread Eterne's countervail.

Awake ! arise ! this is no time for rest !
I shouted to my sleeping gods ; they turned
Their sleepy eyes to the far mountain crest,
Whence gods avenging questing spirits spurned.

X

I ploughed through wastes of faded palimpsests,
Black with the wounds of mighty winds that strove,
With shattered wrestling arms and bleeding breasts,
To drag from earth and heaven their treasure
trove, —

The secret of their force ; the central power
That moves the wheels of being and enclasps
With tireless energy the star, the flower,
And counts the endless æons that elapse

'Twixt birth and death of all the quenchless orbs
That wheel through spaces startled with their
flash,
That dies into the darkness, and absorbs
Into the speechless silences the crash

The Hidden

Of thundering worlds : Is it all blind Force?
Some mad Cyclopean fury, that delights
To trample worlds in its maniac course,
Break sun-stars into blazing aerolites,

Then rest o'er all the Chaos it has made,
Let flux and reflux stem the madd'ning tide,
And over Death and Ruin be displayed
The crimson standard of the Crucified.

XI

And yet such dreams but vex the ethereal sense,
Pollute the sweeter atmosphere of thought,
And chide the languid soul's incompetence
To reach and challenge all that it has sought.

For, straining to the finer harmonies,
That float above the discords of the mind,
It leans its ear to catch the far-off cries,
That hover o'er the wailings of the wind.

Unlocks its eyes to catch the first faint ray
That creeps above the far horizon's rim,
And strikes the hills and seas to perfect day,
And draws from soaring birds their matin hymn.

Cithara Mea

And the dumb statue soul essays to speak,
To sing with Nature unto Nature's God ;
Alas ! how shall a stammering utterance seek
'T' interpret Him ? shall star be sung by clod ?

And the diameter of Being be crossed
By some ephemera that beats his wings
His little hour across the tempest-tossed,
And swollen seas of his imaginings ?

XII

And, lo ! the tiny camera tries to cast
On the stelled canvas of the purple night,
Across the yawnings of a space crevassed,
And ravined through the glaciers of light,

Its mock presentment of the mysterious Will
That interpenetrates the universe ;
Sows suns like sands ; and then grows silent till
The spheres their tremulous litanies rehearse,

And orb to orb exultantly replies,
And hymns the vast volition that outspreads
Its wings from pole to pole of farthest skies,
And all the stellar mazes lightly treads,

The Hidden

And yet is so elusive that the eye,
Covetous and capacious, of the soul,
Searching the void abysses of the sky,
Fails to enfold that comprehensive whole,

That soars beyond the atmosphere of thought,
And hides in blinding light its majesty ;
Stoops to a sordid atom, and is sought
By Heaven's tumultuous galaxy.

XIII

What then, O Pilgrim of the night, O Soul !
Avails thy scallop shell, thy sandalled feet ;
Telling thy beads of dumb despair and dole,
Stung by the summer sun, the winter's sleet ?

Thine eyes are dimmed with gazing from afar,
In grays of twilight, duns of arctic skies,
Where glitter, as in caves the bright felspar,
Solemn and silent the Night's childlike eyes.

Dumb are the stars ; and dumb the grassy graves ;
Silent the gods of thine ethereal thought ;
For thou art whipped as with a felon's staves,
When thy pride tells thee — He, whom thou hast
sought,

Cithara Mea

Thy God, Thy King, Thy Father — is thyself !
Unconscious deity — all too conscious worm !
Nay, lift thee on thy pedestals of pelf,
Be calm as God ; and let thy grace affirm

Thy dignity, O man ! and let the nations say,
These be thy Gods, O Israel ! come, adore !
Lo ! the bruised idols strew the world's way,
And mocking laughter peals from shore to shore.

XIV

An empty catafalque ; the tapers burned
In the night gloom of the cathedral aisle ;
Thither the tear-stained yearning faces turned
Of a vast multitude of men, the while

Their veiled sisters sobbed behind the screen.
'T was night without ; and the strong rain did
 plash
On window and on roof ; and oft between
The lightning's gleams the thunder's drums did
 crash.

The preacher bowed his face upon his hands,
He durst not look upon that weeping crowd ;
And there where the dismantled altar stands,
A figure paused, and wailing cried aloud :

The Hidden

Preacher ! O preacher ! give to us a sign !
For thou hast watched and wept from the fair
dawn ;

Where has the Presence fled ? the Form Divine ?
Whither has our God, our King, withdrawn ?

No answer came from out that muffled shape ;
But Death clanked up the dark and silent aisle,
And cried : Through me alone shall ye escape
The blindness of your prison domicile.

XV

Then a great silence fell, and all was still,
Still as a winter's night, when light grows dim,
And all the star-lyres vibrate to fulfil
Vesperal praises to the Elohim.

The rain had ceased ; the preacher never spoke,
And all awaited voices from the vast,
Speechless, o'erhanging silences whence broke
Ghosts of the present, spectres of the past.

They glowered through the windowed dusk, and
shook
Their threat'ning shrouded hands, enmailed by
Death,
Whilst he, with hour-glass and his scythed crook,
Sucked out of dying Time its one last breath,

Cithara Mea

And scattered on the floor the gliding sands,
From shattered glass, that hid in crannied space ;
Then swept, as sweeps the wave on winter strands
Preacher and people from that mournful place.

And gathered from the cataclysms passed,
And swollen with tears of human misery,
Down the far-stricken gulfs by death crevassed
Thundered the cataracts of eternity !

THE REVEALED

THE REVEALED

I

NOW, I've proclaimed a war with lusty
death —

I say he's not the master of our fate :
I claim for pulsing life, for rhythmic breath,
The orbit of a universe, disconsolate,

If but the dim perspective of the tomb
Narrows in its groove our destinies ;
If but October grays, December's gloom
Lean down and brood from God's penurious skies.

I hold that Life is Life ; that Life is Will, —
A finite emanation from the Infinite ;
That holds the Harp of Time, and every thrill
Wafts upwards to the sympathetic sight

Of Him, who, throned afar, holds deathless watch
O'er all His plastic hands have deftly made,
And reaches through His myriad realms to catch
The worship of a race He has betrayed,

Cithara Mea

If night treads out our short and pallid day,
If the grave holds in its rapacious maw
Victims of Heaven's fallacious display —
Disproof that Light is Light — that Light is Law.

II

I've tired of Titans heaping thought on thought,
Projecting their own shadows on the clouds, —
Vast Brocken-spectres with their colors caught
From funereal mutes and coffin shrouds.

O man ! thou little mime upon the deck
Of this lone ship upon the wastes of space,
How hast thou laboured for th' impending wreck,
And cast thy foolish antics in the face

Of the great spirits, who watching from afar
Would lead thee safe within the harbor lights,
Over the surges of the harbor bar,
Beyond the pallid days, the starless nights,

Into the opal depths of the great Sea,
That murmurs round the central throne of Him
Whose eyes have lighted from eternity
The world of His wond'ring Cherubim.

The Revealed

O Titans ! cease sand-building on the shores,
Where ceaseless wash the mordant waves of Time !
O mimes ! beneath your masks and buskins roars
The sea that swings to one discordant chime !!

III

At last, I looked into my soul, and cried : —
Thou, thou at least, canst tell me nought but truth ;
Thou oracle of God, through thee doth surge the
 tide
Of everlasting thought, for bene, for ruth —

Pythia, that sittest in the inner shrine,
Votaries around thee, and a voice within ;
I have no gift to move thee, nor incline
Thy utterance to desires that are akin

To those of disembodied souls that lave
Their tresses in the lakes of love that swim,
Shadowed, unstirred by golden clouds that clave
Around the feet of brooding seraphim.

Yet, shalt thou speak, O soul of mine, that sprang,
Minerva-like, from out the brain of God !
Knowest thou not thy Father midst the clang
And turbulence that stirs this earthly clod ?

Cithara Mea

Thou, who hast conquered the immensities,
Hast winged the thickest airs of farthest space,
Still for a moment thy rapt ecstasies,
Show me thy God, thy Father, face to face !

IV

Beyond the vault of logic, and the flight
Of Fancy, that with eagle pinions sweeps
From orb to orb of yonder quiv'ring night,
From peak to peak of yon celestial steeps,

Go forth, my soul. As on the desert isle
Hovers the soul of science, and the lips
Of men are silent, as the shades defile,
And sweep in triumph o'er the sun's eclipse,

So hover thou ! and hood thy burning eyes
Of all thy restless thoughts ; let eye of faith,
Swift and intuitive, watch the clouded skies
For the one flash of face of Him, who saith :

I am Who am ; darkness is round My throne ;
My footstool is enwreathed in the clouds ;
In the vast halls of Heaven I sit alone ;
The myriad-wingéd cherubim enshrouds

The Revealed

My Majesty. How shall one poor, broken wing
Touch the high altitudes of the Holy Mount?
How shall the wavering jet of faith upspring
To fill its tulip-chalice at His fount?

V

Yet, Faith must lead thee where the Fancy fails;
Lo! the clouds part around His sandalled feet.
Higher, my soul! behold, the folded veils
Draw back in mercy from the mercy-seat!

God's vesture curves and floats around His throne,
As float ensanguined clouds at eventide;
His Heaven is thickly peopled; yet alone
In their majestic solitude abide

The Holy Ones. No angel wing hath swept
The golden dust of all the centuries,
Or tears the lonely Æons have bewept,
And sunk into the silence of eternities,

There where His footstool stretches thro' the
cloud;
Yet, the vast silences of God are stirred
By all the pauseless waves that cry aloud
In anthems that afar are feebly heard,

Cithara Mea

Although the orbéd heaven reels and quakes
Under the thunders that are ever rolled
From shrill-voiced spirits o'er the quivering lakes
Of spaces populous, or of worlds unsouled.

VI

There poise thee on thy steady wing, my soul !
Fear not nor waver in thy lofty flight ;
Let no unreasoned dread thy nerves control
In this thy leap towards the Infinite.

Cast thine eyes upwards to where the radiant
zone

Cinctures with studded stars the breast of God,
Holds He His sceptred Hand before His throne ?
Rules He the lightnings with His shepherd's rod ?

Here is no room for senses' subsidence ;
Thine eagle glance must face the Royal Sun ;
Higher, my soul, above the starlit trance
Look thou, nor waver till thy task be done.

Dread not the deep-bowed faces all around,
The quivering tones of the too tremulous choirs,
Wrapt in thine own deep silence and profound,
Mark where the last reluctant cloud expires,

The Revealed

And shows the Face of the All-Perfect One !
How doth it shine from out the blinding maze ?
How blend into one mighty monotone
Argent of moons, and gold of summer days !

VII

Thou too ambitious one, return ! return !
Imperfect the All-Perfect canst thou see ?
Why will the silvered moth forever burn
In the swift raptures of one agony ?

It is not safe to poise thee on the wings
Of faith beyond the starlit pinnacles,
Where thy great compeer, Intellect, upsprings
To challenge the unsleeping sentinels,

That guard the light-paved avenues of Heaven,
Swing 'neath their feet the everlasting wheel,
And tell in thunder-crash, in swift-winged levin —
Thou canst not penetrate — He must reveal.

Come back to thy Dodona grove, my soul !
Be lonely ; let no vaulting dreams aspire !
Earth holds thee, as the fragile strings control
The sacrificial bird on funeral pyre.

Cithara Mea

Here may'st thou see God's Face amid the gloom
Envisaged ; may'st hear the gentle sigh
Whispered, as whisper 'mid the dusk's perfume
Sobs of the night-jar's dolorous litany.

VIII

Then, where 's the mighty Heaven which Dante
feigned?

Where are the fields of Light, where Beatrice led
(Sceptred and laurelled for his song unstained,
Cypressed, for he saw the unblessed dead.)

Her great grave poet, with the eyelids drooped
Beneath the weight of myrtle and of bays,
And the long aisles of night, wherein he stooped,
And strained for the reluctant, halcyon days?

And where the Patmos vision, sun-enshrined,
And dappled with the moons of gleaming pearls,
The sea of light, where poet-saint combined
Waves of the chrysoprase, and crests of beryls?

Or that high rapture, whence he called to God,
Tenter of Tarsus, from the Kedar tents
Of the vast Pagan world, that hymned abroad
Elysium, and its fleshed habiliments?

The Revealed

Are these but vague, but artful symbolisms,
To cheat a credulous, but ambitious race,
Which calls for God for ever from th' abysms
Of all His silent, irresponsible space?

IX

I saw a spirit floating above God,
The old Judaic sprite of fear and scorn,
Dread of the serpent's tooth, and emerald,
Contempt, and proud uplifting of the horn,

When the Unseen drew back his smiting hands,
And gloved them at the voice of prayer or hymn,
And the lost race upraised o'er Arab sands
A man-made idol for their Elohim.

I know that Spirit flaps his hooked wings
Into God's face to-day, as yesterday ;
I know men's blind desire forever rings :
Show us the Father ; this is what we pray !

And yet did God but yield to their desire,
Their everlasting lust for hidden things ;
Did He reveal Him on His wheels of Fire,
And show of Life and Death the secret springs,

Cithara Mea

They would but scorn Him for His gentleness,
As scorned all blatant Jewry devil-driven ;
Seek to unthrone Him for divine largess,
Unwing His Angels, and unhinge His Heaven !

X

And yet we look upon Him, as of old
The scaled and soiled fisher-folk did look
With blank unconscious stare and visage bold
Upon the face of Christ ; whilst angels shook

Their vast outspreading pinions o'er His head,
And down from the empyrean floats the Dove,
Hovers with gleaming breast and wings outspread
In all the raptures of the Triune Love.

'T was but a glimpse ; but as the wind uplifts
The fleecy haze, and shows the Holy Mount,
Where Time forever sleeps on snowy drifts,
And all the seas exhaust th' eternal fount ;

So the far flash of heaven revealed the light
That broke in meteor gleamings from the breast
Of God ; lest the effulgence blind the sight
Of eyes, white-filmed from the holy Quest,

The Revealed

Then all was gray again ; and here was Man,
And all the joy Transfiguration wrought
Pales from its sudden splendor, and grows wan,
And faith assumes what the far vision brought.

XI

Where a wan water stares unto the sky
From a fringed socket of empurpled hills,
Unflecked by wing of bird, starred cope, or
 shadowy
Dream-picture, that from azure deeps distils,

And where a black rock, that has shook aside
The amorous curls of a tangled vine,
Frowns to its shadow in the sleeping tide,
And the deep silence pants for the Divine,

A prophet sate, long-bearded and gray-browed,
Sate and awaited one prophetic sign ;
Over the glassy depths, deep bayed and bowed,
Eyre of eagle, and the lion's shrine.

Lo ! a faint coruscation on the cloud,
And just a ripple on the water's face,
And just a whisper's echo, not so loud
As to disturb the trout's unconscious grace !

Cithara Mea

The seer arose, and with a trumpet tongue
As when the thunder giant stalks abroad,
He woke the World-Lyre with stars o'erstrung :
" I've seen the Face — I've heard the Voice of
God ! "

XII

I placed my Poet against your scientist ;
I placed my Prophet-King against your Poet.
There was one Thabor in the years of Christ ;
To-day a Thabor is to all who know it.

So says the pallid priest, with tear-dimmed eyes,
Wondering at the white Circle of the Host,
Trembling to touch It, whilst the vast surmise
Wanders o'er Heaven, as a happy ghost

Who, on its birthday in eternity,
Brushes the fields of air with winged feet,
Pauses and speculates, Can this be I —
Soul of my Soul — thy blessedness complete ?

So says the dreaming nun, in cell and choir,
Watching the silent gate for word or sign ;
Or the white blood-stained Figure to inspire
For earth's desires some Heaven's anodyne.

The Revealed

And who shall say beneath that thorn-crowned
head

God's eyes flash not from out their film's eclipse?
And who shall say, beneath the mystic Bread
Gleams not, to Faith, Christ's white apocalypse?

XIII

And I, as one blindfolded from his birth,
Stumble and stray around my Father's house,
Call with up-pleading hands to heaven and earth
That light my aching sight might yet espouse.

And, lo ! I hear, behind the arras stirred
By faintest breathing, sounds of gliding feet,
And just the echo of a laughing word,
And just a surmise that the spirits sweet,

Who have disrobed them of the vesture vile
Of this dread body, mock me in their love,
And whisper, "See, he stumbleth yet awhile,
He seeketh shadows, like a blinded dove.

"He seeth not the Father smiling there,
And just eluding his complaining hands ;
He beats with querulous pain the silent air ;
Could we but reach him, and unloose his bands,

Cithara Mea

And breathe upon his mouth and on his face
A gentle air, as when the Spirit moves ;
And show how black abyss and sunlit space
Are tremulous with the souls of all he loves."

XIV

And one, in muffled tones, as in a mist
Of Alpine vapor, when deep calls to deep,
Whispered, The Time, the Time, for God His tryst !
Let us awake him, for his senses sleep,

Smooth out the wrinkles of far fields of space,
Marshal the stricken suns till they unite
Upon the Tree of Life, as clusters grace
The orange groves beneath the pale moonlight ;

And tell him, Here 's God's light-throne, but 't is
muffled,
And it is night unto the Face of God ;
Here is the sea of heaven, unflecked, unruffled ;
Open thine eyes to vistas yet untrod !

And one broke in, Let all the harps of heaven
Blend in one burst of virile symphony,
As when earth's mighty forests tempest-riven
Unloose their stops in frenzied agony.

The Revealed

And let the far star-sentinels combine
Shrill harmony and the flame-plumed spherul song,
'Till earth's and the skied denizens' marshalled
line
Long-buried praises from dead worlds prolong.

XV

And I alone, as in a theatre vast
And empty, at the painted drop-scene stared ;
And, as a frightened child doth upward cast
His eyes at some unbodied spectre scared,

Thought, Is this all, or shall the curtain lift ?
And shall I take my chance of what I see ?
Far sunlit spaces through a dreary rift —
And through a chink of death, the eternal Sea !

Shall I say, Yes ! O Spirits, strain the cords,
And let the scene curl upwards to the sky,
And let the crash of all your heaven-strung chords
Break on my poppiéd senses, till they cry,

Peace, and be still ! and give me back my earth !
Ah, yes ! my saints, untouchéd be your lyres ;
Till death of life breaks into sudden birth,
And dream of death in waking day expires.

Cithara Mea

**And hush the blinding light of heaven's spheres,
I am content to bear the transient cost.
For all the Vision that bowed heaven reveres,
Leave me the moon-like meekness of my Host !**

A MATIN-SONG

A MATIN-SONG

SEA ! and oh, tranquil Sea !
Belted with gleaming pearls,
Warden of treasures and gold,
Is it true, O pitiless Sea,
That 'neath where thy wave hath rolled
Thou holdest forever in fee,
In the strength of eddying swirls,
Gold of men, and their might,
Blanched in the green twilight,
Where no power of pity imperils
Thy power that is infinite ?

Waves ! and oh, swelling waves !
Who hath lifted ye up,
And flung ye to waste on the shore,
As wine from a wassail cup ?
Why spend ye your strength in vain
To-day, as ever of yore ?
Scooped from the dusky caves,
Have ye no purpose, or pain
Of forethought, to lavish and lower
Your crested strength in the rain
That weepeth, and is no more ?

Cithara Mea

Sands ! and oh, shining sands !
Dimpled with rainbow shells,
Smooth, and shining, and firm,
As if never the ocean swells,
In the strength and stress of the storm,
Leaguered by high commands
From the god of the air who indwells,
Had never shivered their strength
On your patient face ; will ye keep
Forever the same, through the length
Of leagues by the lips of the deep ?

Ship ! and oh, phantom Ship !
Thy tall spars netting the sky,
Plunging at every dip
And decline of the turbulent seas ;
Fling back to us the Key,
That ever from lip to lip
Intones thy far destiny.
Silent and sad to the breeze
Answer thy canvassed shrouds ;
Thine, too, are the mysteries
Of the stars and clouds !

THE DREADED DAWN

THE DREADED DAWN

ISMENE! we walked the sands together,
And I was winter, and you were May ;
But our love of the sea broke Time asunder,
Made summer for both that happy day.

Ismene ! your hand was gathered in mine,
As the heart of a rose in its withered leaves ;
And your finger petals twined and closed,
As your memory twines around him that grieves.

Ismene ! your gray eyes wandered afar
O'er the tumbling billows that heaved and broke,
And then sought mine ; but I feared to look,
Lest the soul that I dreaded had there awoke.

Ismene ! a child thou wert then, and a child
I prayed you'd remain through the clust'ring
years ;
Alas ! for time knows but growth and change,
And they come with the terrors of list'ning fears.

Cithara Mea

Ismene ! you lifted a shell to the shell
Of the soft pink ears that had heard but the
notes
That slip from the skies, as a loosened lock
Slips over thy neck, and the salt wind floats.

Ismene ! you said, Hark, hark to the waves
And the echoing sounds from the far-off shore !
I wonder do angels play with shells,
Do they start at the leap of the sea's long roar?

Ismene ! I thanked my God at the word,
Tho' I dreaded to meet thy soft gray eye,
And I said in my heart, She is still but a child,
We may linger and love as in days gone by.

Ismene ! the hooded eve came down,
And a shadow fell betwixt you and me,
For your brow grew troubled, and you looked afar
O'er the purple wastes of the twilight sea.

Ismene ! you said, Let us go ; and you drew
The trembling petals of your white hand
From mine, that closed, as the Hand of God
Drew up His curtains o'er sea and land.

The Dreaded Dawn

Ismene ! I said, Behold the Night,
The hermit Night, and his sanctities
Of star and wave ; then I ventured to look
In the fathomless depths of Ismene's eyes.

Ismene ! I hoped that thy child-soul gazed
Through eyes that were soft as the eyes of a
fawn,
Alas ! 't was a woman's soul looked at me —
I was face to face with *the dreaded dawn !*

A VESPERAL

A VESPERAL

OUT of the shadowy East
Looms the shadow of Night ;
God draws up o'er the cage
Of earth, with its man and beast,
His arras of curtained light ;
And, as a bird in his rage
At the dark, sings long and loud,
Lifting his head on high —
Higher in dreams than the cloud —
Sings loud and long as a lark,
Who seeks the silence of skies,
Lest the gross sounds of earth
Should pierce his illumined dark,
Or echo in feeble cries
His rapture's jubilant birth.
So man, in the curtained gloom
Of night, apprehends the vast
Sweep of the harmonies ;
Spacious and solemn they float
From the soul of man to the sky,

Cithara Mea

Upwards and onwards cast ;
From the star to the list'ning soul ;
Who shall interpret that cry ?
Does it die in the dim remote ?
Or far as the spheres unroll,
Does it echo forever and aye, —
A plaint in the infinite void,
As of a spirit decoyed
From its native heaven astray ?
A challenge from pole to pole
For a new life's assay ?

When o'er the Arab sands
Moved the shadowy cloud,
Hung over Israel's ark,
It was but a mist, till the dark
Drew o'er the earth a shroud
As Night's black empire demands.
And the smoke flashed into flame
Of ruddy splendor and heat,
And bent in the wind and bowed
Its light and its heat afar.
And the thoughts of men in the day
Are smoke and mist till the dusk
Breathes on the pillared cloud ;
And, lo ! the columnar flame
Out of the darkness wakes

A Vespéral

Light, and heat, and the musk
Of perfumed, perfected thought.
Hail ! then, to thee, O Night !
Thou alone canst evolve
Fury and flame and light
From the vast suns that revolve
At thy beck ; and thou, too, alone
Canst change the gray monotone
Of vaporous misty dreams
To the godlike flame of thought,
When man in his madness deems
The rapture and rage beseems
His soul from the heavens far-brought.

THE SOUL-BELL

THE SOUL-BELL

NIGHT, and its noon, and a far to-morrow,
Gray with the fears
Of a Future that leans to a Past to borrow
Its meed of tears.

White are the drifts outside ; and hither,
Around her bed,
White comes the face, that asks, Oh, whither
Fares forth my dead ?

White is the taper clasped in her fingers !
Her lips are white ;
Recall Thy judgment, O God ! that lingers
This weary night !

Hark ! from the ivy across the river
Moaneth the bell ;
Death ! fling thy arrow back to its quiver ;
There ! it is well !

Still as the marble and cold she seemeth,
Looking afar ;
Round the wide orb of her future gleameth
Her Life's lone star.

Cithara Mea

Frail, how the garment of Life still holds her
From the far flight
Through the trail of the stars, whose eyes enfold her
Beyond the night.

Hark ! how again the soul-bell splinters
The granite gloom,
Thick with the murk of a thousand winters,
And a halting doom.

Come, O ye Spirits, that float and hover
Above the soul !
Is there no gleam of bliss to cover
Gray death and dole ?

There, once again, like a bolt from heaven,
(Why always three ?)
Thunders the soul-bell till earth is riven
'Twixt you and me.

A flash of crimson ; in some far bourn
A star hath bled ;
Earth and the sky have met to mourn
Ismene, dead !

APOTHEOSIS

APOTHEOSIS

GOD took her in the dawn of life,
And rightly, for what right have we
To gainsay God's economy
Through all our fretfulness and strife?
He holds in fief what he has made,
And star and flower, and bird and blade
Bend to His beck. If therefore He
Some matin hour looks round His choirs,
And thinks, with all their pomp displayed, —
Cherubic love, seraphic fires, —
He misses one sweet face and shy ;
Or, in the unisoned gold lyres
Caught in angelic hands, one string,
Cut from a human heart to try
A note than heaven's more ravishing,
Would vibrate 'neath His loving hand,
And sing and soar at His command,
What right have we, here lingering,
To quench in question such demand?

Cithara Mea

Or if my Lady bent her head,
Star-crowned and silver-crescented,
And saw a lily's golden spear
Sheathed in scabbard velvet;
And thinks that "wonder" should be here,
In my own garden; 't is too fair
For that brown earth, and that broad stare
Of foolish vagrants; what know they
Of beauty, but to watch decay
Print his brown fingers, withering?
And if my Lady's gardener comes
With silver shears and reverent head
And cuts the juicy stem, or plucks
The fair thing by its fibre strings,
Plants it anew beneath the flux
And flow of amber-colored springs,
That leap where'er my Lady's feet
Prints a columbar paraclete;
Have you or I the right to fling
Salt tears in peevish questioning?

Ah, no! but if God leaves the dreams, —
The happy gift of Memory, —
Of stringéd harp and perfumed flower,
Strung on the branches near the stream
Or planted at my Lady's feet,
Fairest in all her Eden bower,

Apotheosis

That lines the crystal-paven street,
And if God leans an ear to catch
Æolian melodies, passing sweet,
From that sweet harp whose tones attach
Mute wond'ring angels' sympathy ;
Though harp and flower are lost to us,
Of that sweet soul so covetous,
We shall not grudge to Paradise
Our loved ones' apotheosis !

A NOCTURNE

A NOCTURNE

"Quid sit futurum cras, fuge querere."

I

TEARLESS, but with awe-stricken eyes she
stood

Beside me in the ling'ring of the night,
Just when the dusk was challenging the light,
And questioning its rights o'er field and flood ;
Her trembling lips vermillioned were with blood,
But the soft gates of speech did ope despite
The warning fingers tinted red and white,
As if they'd clasped the nails of Holy Rood.

But the lips bit as if in sudden pain,
Then twice ensanguined uttered this one word :
"If thou didst know ;" and placing once again
The white mute finger on the trembling chord
Of speech, the vision vanished in the fane
Of forms invisible, and words unheard.

Cithara Mea

II

Then sleep fled far ; for as the rushing tide
Of fretful water, that is rudely flung
In silvern drops from every steeléd rung,
Makes the vast wheel revolve ; and ev'ry stride
Sets in imperious motion, side by side,
The pliant mechanism, lightly hung ;
So the great stream of thought, so quickly sprung,
Set all conjectures wand'ring far and wide.

“ If thou didst know ” — what rapt mysteriousness
Is veiled behind this dark and sibyl speech ?
What thread of fate ? What promise of duress ?
What hand from out the mists of time to reach,
And frame and mould in fretful hiddenness
The lessons that these dusk-drawn visions
teach ?

III

And did I know that form and that face ?
Or recognise those veiled lineaments ?
Ah, yes ! a chain of dim, far-off events
Drew from the past the wonder and the grace,
That breathed round her like a crystal case,
And made those spiritual environments
An atmosphere beyond all touch and sense,
Beyond all limits of our time and space.

A Nocturne

For she would speak as one who fain were mute,
And she would look as seeing things afar,
And the soul-soilings that so oft imbrute,
She touched as with the pencil of a star ;
And all earth's Protean lies she did confute,
And harness slaves to Faith's triumphal car.

IV

How long ago? Ah, well, just hark ! and count
The beads of years that since our youth have
rolled ;
And yet, 't is not as beadsman's rosary told,
I number the sad days since she did mount
A spirit to the spirit's happy fount
Of life, whose light doth all great things enfold.
'T was but to-day the black reluctant mould,
Flung on the virginal tablets that surmount

Her grave, did crumble ; and hither at my feet
The rude discourteous spade did idly fling
A red-brown fragment and a wisp of hair,
Spared by the unconscious chemists that complete
The work of death ; 't was all that his dread
sting
Had left of all was perfect, and most fair.

Cithara Mea

V

Now I was reverent, for I pitied her,
And this her relic which I gently raised,
While the rough sexton greatly was amazed
That such a piteous shell should move or stir
Aught but contempt ; to me 't was harbinger
Of dest'nies fulfilled, and high upraised, —
A mute memento of a soul, that, dazed
By its too daring thoughts, would far prefer
The unconscious simply-spoken symbolism
Of all her faith and lowly love did teach.
Such are the souls that spring from the abysm
Of Time, and stretch towards the farthest reach,
Where life's dim stainings touch God's faultless
prism,
Transmuted beyond the power of human speech.

VI

But if to-day I was so calm and reverent,
And only wondered at this awful birth,
Wrought by the subtle alchemists of earth,
Why did she come with such dread looks intent,
And rouse me from lethargic wonderment
Into a paroxysm of doubt and dearth
Of faith ; me, whom the widest girth
Of God's great universe can scarce content ?

A Nocturne

"If thou didst know!" Spare me, thou spectral
saint!

Wrap up thy secrets in the mist and cloud,
Or visit those weak souls that fail and faint
At every rustling of the spirit's shroud;
No feeble suppliance for some hidden taint
Shall plead my soul, by midnight terrors
cowed.

VII

And if thy raised forefinger threatens fate,
Wrought in the dark conspirings of the years,
In pestles filled with all the floods of tears,
That drop like goutts of blood from love or hate;
It shall not move me from the high estate,
Where in the sympathy of lost compeers, —
My mountain poets, my far-sighted seers, —
I look at life; nor sunken nor elate,

I place my back against the walls of time,
And bid the vengeful years come swiftly on,
On with the music march, the funeral chime,
With blackest spectres of the life that's gone
Down the dim valleys, laced with serpent slime
Where neither sun nor stars nor moon hath
ever shone.

Cithara Mea

VIII

And yet "If thou didst know," what sad portent
Is hid beneath these words of simplest guise?
For if I reason, "'T is madness to be wise,
Yet wisdom from above is often lent,
With all the forethought of a wise intent,
So when the sheeted spectral years shall rise,
Holding in trembling hands my destinies,
I may prepare for peace and anguish blent,"

Even then I sink in doubt. That pregnant hint,
Does it forecast my future weal or woe?
Is it the sunshine's gold, or purple tint,
Flung from the frowning clouds that slowly go
Athwart my path? Storms rave or sunbeams glint;
I set my face 'gainst all the winds that blow.

IX

Curious, but unconcerned, I'll daily watch
The long, slow ribbon of my life unrolled,
Each hour employ some mystery to unfold,
Some prophecy to unravel, or to catch
The sounds that follow th' uplifted latch
In some dark haunted chambers, where untold
Lie secrets of the gods, bestial, unsouled,
Beyond Time's alchemy, or Death's despatch.

A Nocturne

Calm as the mystics by the sacred stream,
Wrapt in the high empyrean of pure thought,
A silent witness of that wizard's dream
The cunning of the fictile mind has wrought
To cheat our lying senses — this I'll deem
A foil for Fate, and all that Fate has brought.

X

I wonder shall this dawn-lit vision rise,
Those future halcyon moments to perplex?
I wonder shall these dark suggestions vex
The calm, untroubled seas of sightless eyes,
Such as the poets in their large surmise
Gave to their gods, to watch the high convex
Of heaven's broad azure, troubled with the
flecks
And flocs that from immensity arise?

For mark you, though the human eye can
grasp
And measure the wide orbits of the spheres,
And though the insatiable soul can clasp,
And hold commune with spirits as compeers ;
One fretful mote makes myriad worlds collapse,
One doubt may break the crystal vase of
tears.

Cithara Mea

XI

I fear these words would mar the tranquil bliss,
That hovers like an angel 'bove th' Orient ;
I think no sage on highest thought intent
Could seal his ears unto the strident hiss,
That leaps from lips of such dark threats as this ;
For how to wrap oneself in deep content
From rifted discord of an instrument,
Is the one secret human lore may miss.

A gadfly drove a goddess to despair :
And the far-seeing God lay chained and prone,
His wisdom vanquished, his forethought laid bare,
And the wild winds of earth caught up his moan,
And echoed down the centuries, gaunt and sere,
Its bliss, its bane, for which no tears atone.

XII

Then whither shall I turn from this dark Fate?
For human foresight 's but a feeble guess,
A blind leap into gulfs of nothingness,
From which the cry of rescue comes too late.
Nor can your pythoness in frenzy sate
The all too urgent questionings of distress,
The knockings of a soul in dire duress,
To lay the ever-haunting ghost prostrate.

A Nocturne

Surely my soul is not imprisoned here,
 Against the frowning walls of destiny
To beat its wings in bursts of wild despair,
 And clamor to its God to set it free?
Come back ! come back ! O spectral saint ! to share
 My madness or to solve thy mystery.

QUESTIONINGS

QUESTIONINGS

MARVELLOUS are thy laws,
O Nature ! where dost hide thy
pent-up heart,
Leaping with wild life in every part,
And streaming without one intermittent pause,
Through the fine filaments of capillaries
In man, and flower, and grass and veined leaf?
Whence comes thy winter's systole of grief,
When shrinking and ashamed of thy nakedness,
And blanched by terrors of thy dire distress,
Thou sinkest like a suppliant to thy knees,
And prayest some hidden God to clothe and
warm thee,
And give thee spring's bright veilings, summer's
livery?

Wondrous are thy ways,
O Nature ! what vast searching mind
Encompasses thee, as the moist Southern wind

Cithara Mea

Wraps round thy myriad children with its
warmth,
When the unfeathered ice-wind fiercely storm'th?
What finger draws thy organ mysteries,
And frets the palpitating keys
Into a hurricane of sound, or a faint breath,
That seems the voice of soul that listeneth
For one farewell from the dumb lips it left?
And what dread hand pushed from behind the
arras
Of space illimitable, doth tease and harass
Into unbending discipline thy child,
Who starts and wonders, yet would fain embarrass
The secret friend, whose mercy eyes and mild
Close not nor turn from soul or form defiled?

Majestic are thy works,
O Nature ! where doth dwell thy mighty soul?
What vast voluted caverns doth enroll
The subtle spirit that forever lurks,
Vap'rous, like an essence that 's distilled
From a vast limbec odorously filled
Of spices by a cunning alchemist?
What nicely-mortised sympathies enlist
Thy labors like a chained and fettered
slave
In the black midnight of a wizard's cave?

Questionings

What dream I? Slave? Nay, monarch of the
spheres,
Whose feet the thunder's black battalions trod,
Whose hand hath grasped the forkéd lightning's
spears —
Breath of the universe ! Nature's king ! Our God !

**WHAT ARY SCHEFFER
PAINTED**

6

81

WHAT ARY SCHEFFER PAINTED

St. Aug. Conf. Lib. ix., cap. x., 3.

I

'T WAS at Ostia-Tiber and springtime :
through the green mist that hung on
the trees

Brown birds shook their love songs in rapture ;
and earth, but for the moan of her seas,
Was silent with joy ; it was evening ; a glory still
hung in the west,

Where the curls of his fires marked the place
where the sun-god had reeled to his rest.

And she sat beside me, my mother, whose face I
still trembled to see —

I knew that its olive was furrowed with lines
through her anguish for me ;

I knew that the wide eyes were sad from the
watch in the night, and the tear,

That blurred the soft beauty of stars, when the
hand that was lingering here

Cithara Mea

On my knee, firmly clasped in my own, was lifted
to God in the night,
And the pulses of stars and her pulses of pain,
were both bare to His sight.

II

Well, there in the fragrance of twilight, I hooded
my reason ; he slept ;
And I drew forth from my Fancy, my dove with
her pinions of pearl, that kept
Folded close (for this falcon she feared since
the Pasch and the baptismal tryst,
When I threw off the purple of Plato, and put on
the fool-garments of Christ).
And I bade her go out into spaces, where never
a sun-shaft had sped,
Nor the arrows of stars ; where the light and the
roar of the furnaces red,
Whence the Godhead had smitten His suns, never
reached but to pause and to die,
Stricken down by the darkness, the silence, that
circle our space as a sky ;
And there she should pause ; and eyes closed,
wings folded, should answer me this :
If a silence so great could encompass a soul yet
unraised to the bliss

What Ary Scheffer Painted

Of a heaven made perfect with vision of beauty,
so radiant, so full,
That the dream of it weakens us here ; but a
soul that yet clings to this dull,
Cold earth, is environed with nerves that tremble,
and tingle, and shrink —
If a dim sea of silence were round, into which
every whisper should sink ;
Hushed, the roar of the rapid suns, hushed the
trailing of tresses bright,
Which the daring comets loosen, and leave in
their lawless flight,
Hushed the sibilance harsh of the waves when
their white teeth bite the sand ;
Hushed the crash of the siroc ; the seismic terror
that tears the land ;
Hushed the moaning of storms in the pines ;
hushed the lonely horrors of Alps
Where the avalanche roars and leaps on the sum-
mits of hoary scalps ;
Hushed the soft susurrus of prayer ; hushed the
cooing of doves at rest ;
And the tender cry to the mother from the depths
of a downy nest ;
Hushed the opening of buds to the sun ; hushed
the floating of fragrance rare,
Poured out from the hearts of flowers on the
breath of the summer air ;

Cithara Mea

Hushed the falling of dew on the sea ; hushed
the waving of palms in the deep ;
Hushed the pulsings of light in the sky ; hushed
the breathing of babes in their sleep ;
And all things held their breath ; and the beat-
ings of Time should cease ;
Could we call such silence, rest for that soul ?
could we call it peace ?

III

But lo ! as I spoke, pinions broken, eyes filmed,
lay dead at my feet
My dove ; but the falcon unhooded, with a tumult
of cries, with a fleet,
Swift flight as of meteors autumnal, that glide
from the depths of the signs,
Flashed out from the known to the unknown,
from things seen to the hidden designs,
That lie deep in the bosom of God, like fire in a
cloud — and from thence
Leaped down the abysses, was lost in the realms
of the ideal where sense
Faints away and the language of man is a bab-
bling of brooks to the sky,
The $\tau\acute{o}\ \epsilon\nu$ — the $\tau\acute{o}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ — time, space, the soul,
the dead, and the quick who die ;
Ephemeræ all, men and motes, a cycle of shades,
which a breath

What Ary Scheffer Painted

Doth make and unmake, which leap from nothing
to life, to death,
As a mist on the mirror of time, where the face
of the God-head is glassed —
The Eternal — the Selfsame — Who is — who
knoweth no future, no past.
Ah ! Manes, thou fool ! who wouldst seek two
Gods, and two fountains of being,
Find me One ! He eludeth thy grasp, dumbs thy
voice, maketh foolish thy seeing ;
Go, plumb the abysses and find him ; rend na-
ture, and say if you can,
That “ He sleeps in the mineral, dreams in the
animal, wakens in man ! ”
And I reeled from the din of my thoughts ; to
the whirl of conjectures cried : “ Cease ! ”
And with gall on my lips aloud to the night : “ Is
this rest ? is this peace ? ”

IV

And the sailor boy sang in his boat, sang clear
with a promise of life,
The vesper hymn *Lucis Creator*, — but on me in
the night and the strife
A stream, thick and turbid, and luscious, rolled
out from the caverns of the past,
Not of Lethe, would God that it were ! but of
memories vicious and vast,

Cithara Mea

Of dreams that make welcome the dawn, of visions that haunt me and mock
My senses with odors as sweet as an echo of music, — the shock
Of sounds that make drunk with delight, soft touches that torture and thrill,
Pluck my robe, fan my face with a breath of balm, that if breathed would kill ;
And I laid my head low on the sill, filled the hyacinth bells with my tears,
Cried to Christ to relieve me from memories of death, from a future of fears,
From a torture of thought that thrills, from the vengeance of vice, — the increase
Of pain in knowledge — the evil exchange for pride of the gift of peace ;
But a hand soft as light stole around me, and a whisper so low and sweet,
I'd have crept to the ground but she held me,
I'd have crept and clasped her feet :
“ Whilst abyss calleth out to abyss ; whilst deep moaneth back unto deep,
Hearest thou not the soft voice of the spouse,
‘ His Beloved what giveth He ? Sleep ! ’ ”
Ah ! but who's His Beloved ? I cried in my pain ;
then she drew back my head,
Kissed my cheek, but was silent ; God spoke ;
two Sabbaths, and she was dead !

THE DUMB SHALL SPEAK

THE DUMB SHALL SPEAK

I SLEPT, and saw all Nature fronting God —
A fair, white statue, speechless, lifeless, cold ;
A dumb enigma to a race that trod
Beneath it, ever guessing at the mould
And mind that framed it ; and the plastic hand
That wrought its loveliness ; and th' archetype
From whose ethereal essence it was planned,
What time the fruitage of the hours was ripe.
And shall it ever see? And shall those lips
Blush to red rubies in the crystal vase,
When silence breaks beneath the black eclipse
Of lips unhallowed, or some wanton gaze?
And from the unplumbed deeps the answer came :
“No ! but one day in one deep, holy kiss,
A child of God shall press those eyes to flame ;
And one day in the pangs of frenzied bliss
Shall lean upon her mouth, and she will wake ;
And through her eyes of flame shall all men see,
And through her lustrous lips shall all men take
Measure and message of life's mystery.”

THE MAGICIAN, DEATH

THE MAGICIAN, DEATH

I

FOR I do hate thee, O thou spectre Death !
Pale moonbeams flit between thy naked ribs,
There is a hollow darkness o'er thy hips,
And elfin lights gleam from unlustrous eyes,
What canst thou give me? The brown earth and
worms,
And darkness, and the gloom of narrow graves.
"Borne on my mother's breast." Thou mockest
me !

I shall be far as farthest focal sun
From the warm earth and waving grass and leaf.
I want the earth and warmth of breathing men,
And eyes that speak, and hands that clasp, and
lips
That thrill me with a voice and touch of light,
And lift me out of depths of dull despair
Into a heaven of hope and happiness.
I do not want your cold and stately saints,
Sculptured, and niched, and cold in marble
shrouds,

Cithara Mea

Nor your angelic far off symphonies,
That have no motion, light, or breathed form.
Leave me my earth, O thou dread spectre Death !
And keep your heaven for cold and icy saints.
For I do hate thee, thou dread messenger !
And the white moon that shines between thy
 bars,
And makes locked lines and circles on my bed.

II

Come nearer, nearer, thou dread phantom, Death !
Thou art not quite so hideous as I deemed.
Is it a mist of moonbeams that awakes
Soft lines of light, that wrap thee round, and drape
The crags and nodes of thy bleak nudity?
And yet a light breaks through, and swiftly makes
Facets of crystal, glimmering, and flames
That glint and gleam in dusky realms of light.
Lo ! and thou smilest. And the vista'ed past
Of the drear time I've given to the earth
Vapors and fades into a memory.
And the dark future, black with bitter fears,
Leaps into sudden lamps of hope and joy.
Voices of men grow hoarse and bitter harsh ;
And a dim echo steals upon mine ears
Of far off slumb'rous notes that dream and dwell

The Magician, Death

On the discordant chords of my weak soul,
And wake responses that in turn grow pale,
And vanishing in Memory's hidden cells,
Recall some long-lost melody of heaven.
Come nearer, thou magician, nearer still.
I cannot touch thee, spirit as thou art.
But through the glass of thy transparency
I see a heaven leaning on the earth,
A weary earth uplift itself to heaven.

III

Nearer, and nearer still, thou Angel Death !
Why, thou art beautiful, as poet's dreams,
Or the fair forms that sweep into the light
Where glow the furnaces of genius.
Thy rounded shape doth palpitate with life,
And from thy wings new-budded breathes the
scent
Of Paradisial fields, Elysian plains,
Peopled with spirits fairer than the dawn.
Oh ! earth, dull clod, brown, odorless, effete,
I hate thee, and thy creeping parasites.
Lift me, O Death ! unloose these weary bands,
Unlock this prison house and set me free ;
And thou and I will steal from the dark realm,
Glide through the stately avenues of stars,

Cithara Mea

And spurn the enwreathed cloudlets to emerge
In the pavilion palaces of God.
O Death ! my sister, lift thy lustrous eyes,
And open wide the impearled ivory gate.
Lo ! the enchanted islands of the blest !
Lo ! the broad azures of eternity !
Bend down thine ears. In their voluted shells
Murmur the wavelets of th' eternal sea.
Kiss me, my sister ! seal those burning lids,
(Gently I pray thee for I am growing faint)
Till the most High doth break thy signet ring,
Softly unfolding to my wondering eyes —
Lest the too sudden joy should paralyze,
The unimpassioned blisses He has stored, —
The unimagined marvels He has made.

THE SOUL'S FAREWELL

THE SOUL'S FAREWELL

THEY whispered : " 'T is over ; he 's dead ; "
and I heard a faint sigh,
Where I hovered the shadows among, and the
dead form nigh,
I saw them draw down the white veils o'er the
pitiful eyes ;
Close the mouth ; and I gazed without fear or a
gasp of surprise
At that which was I — which was now in the
silence and cold
A Shape, but a beautiful Shape, in the perfected
mould
That God gave to men ; and that men in their
pride, feign to be
The face and the figure of Him who is formless
to see.
And I thought, Was this I? did I live in that
prison of death?
Did I look through those eyes? did I trouble
those lips with my breath?

Cithara Mea

And where did Death knock? and where was the
breach through whose mouth
The Spirit escaped ! as escapes the bound brook
when the South
Breathes soft on the ice-floes, unloosing the grip
of their locks,
And sends them imprisoned to wanton round red,
patient rocks?
And where did I dwell? in what organ or cham-
ber divine
Did I lavish the gifts of the Giver, or pour the
red wine
Of thought till the frail tabernacle did tremble
and throb
In the reanimation, found voice in the psalm or
the sob?
And where, when the spirit had spoken, did she
fly on the wings
Of desire to the heart of creation — the fountain
of things?
And how did she move, or was moved, by the
phantoms around?
Or reach to the orbit of life, and in fancy was
found
In realms where she was an alien where angels
had trod —
Then a voice whispered near me : “ No aliens in
the realms of God ! ”

The Soul's Farewell

And I looked and behold ! there grew out from
the mirror of life
Fair faces and forms I had known in the kingdom of strife.
But their faces were red with the dawn, and their
eyes greatly shone,
Like the foreheads fire-tongued which the Spirit
had breathed upon.
And the flames of their hair were blown back
from their brows far behind,
And their garments drew out and were floated
on waves of the wind ;
And their voices vibrated like sounds that are
heard from afar,
As when in night's tremulous silence star speaketh
to star.
And they said : When in fancy thou fledst across
the wide zone,
That is drawn between spirit and matter, didst
believe thee alone ?
Or when once again thou didst enter that palace
of sighs,
And dream of the dawn that is hidden in folds
of the skies,
Didst thou think in that puissance of pride, which
God leaveth to man,
Lest the truth of his littleness snap the frail
strength of life's span,

Cithara Mea

That the marvels of sun-stars, blind worlds that
 heave them afar,
As the chargers blood-maddened that plunge in
 the lightning of war,
Were made but for thee and thy race? that
 omnipotence vast
Were plastic and fictile for thee; and thy life
 dream that's past?
Lo! knowledge begins where Death ends the
 phantasm of life;
Lo! there the vast peace of his kingdoms un-
 jarred by man's strife.
Look down where the tapers of thoughtful minds
 wave to and fro,
Look up where the sun shines resplendent in
 Truth's happy glow.
And thine earth is a pinpoint in space, and the
 thews of men's might
Wax weak as the gossamer spun from the fire-
 flies at night.
And yet thou art sad. Well, go back to thy
 prison and see,
Wouldst thou take up again the tent fallen, and
 make it for thee
In the desert the place of thy haltings, and for-
 ever to rest,
When the wild winds hiss through it, unfeeling,
 unshackled, unblest.

The Soul's Farewell

Then once more I stooped down, and watched
 closely the tent where I'd dwelt,
It was cold as the tent of the ice-floes the spring-
 time doth melt.
Beneath the closed eyes there was darkness that
 streamed on the face,
Where the sculptor already had smoothed the
 lines I used trace.
And the pitiful hands lay unheaving and crossed
 on the breast ;
Where clustered a handful of lilies, and a sob un-
 repressed
Broke out from the lips of a formless unknown,
 and a grief-buried head
Lay still and forlorn as the symbols of death that
 encompassed the dead.
And memory threw a pale shade on the race I
 had run,
And the moonlight was sickly and pallid ; and
 gray was the sun.
I saw but the weeping of winters ; the sighs of
 the wind
Broke sad as the dread misereres when chancels
 are blind,
And the light hidden under the altar. Will the
 Christ never rise ?
Will the dawn never roll back the stone that
 sepulchres the skies ?

Cithara Mea

And the twilight of summer pearl-tinted, whose
loneliness mars

The mournful meekness of flowers, the sad face
of the stars.

Oh ! life, thou wert lonely and drear, though my
God was anear,

And my days were sepulchred in sadness, and
love insincere.

And yet, O companion ! O comrade ! in fray and
in fight,

'Tis dishonor to leave thee alone to the night, to
the night

Of the grave where Death's servants disrobe thee,
for thy God is afar,

Pale bride thou art left to the handmaids of
Death to unmake and to mar.

But a sister soul spoke, and her voice with emo-
tion was tossed

Like the lights of the seekers that seek in the
quagmires the lost :

The vase He hath made He hath broken ; He will
build it anew

From dust fragments His mercy hath hid 'neath
the grass and the dew.

Oh, thou spirit, rejoice ! thou art free as a bird
that uncaged

The Soul's Farewell

Breaks madly to freedom with raptures, unguessed
at, ungauged.

Thy dream it is over ! thou 'rt awake and the
ghosts of the night

Fade dim in the red of the dawn, in the gold of
the light.

It was death in the night : it is life in the fairness
of day.

Nay, linger not now near thy moulding and vest-
ure of clay.

Thy place is beyond where the star cycles ever
have trod ;

And thy sisters await thee, fair soul, in the realms
of God.

Say Farewell ! once again ; the kind earth will
perform the rest,

Till the day when the dead shall come forth at
the Master's behest.

Then I stooped and I pressed my hot lips to the
cheeks and the brow,

Cold as marble, and stiff as the clay that is cut
by the plough ;

And I shuddered as shudders the soul when it
touches the flesh,

Mark the babe how it screams 'neath the bands
that the spirit enmesh !

Cithara Mea

Then Farewell ! and my earth was a star ; and I
wandered apace

Through the streets where the suns are gold-dust
in the light of God's face.

SENTAN THE CULDEE

SENTAN THE CULDEE

I

***T**HIS is the vision of a man of God,
Long ere the times grew saddest, and the din
Of human voices silenced in the depths
The diapason deep of God, most high.*

Not where the lilies nod, the roses flame,
And gods go glimmering through leafy aisles,
And sons of men grow wanton in the chase,
Or mad with lust of battle and of blood ;
Not even where my saintly brethren dwell
By streams half-haunted by the Pagan Gods,
Half consecrate by Christian rite and prayer, —
My saints, whose daily orisons arise,
And curve, like incense, round the feet of God —
Not there I dwell, but on this beetling crag,
Whose forehead touches heaven's vestibule,
Whose feet are planted in the seething sea ;
Here, on this sullen rock, storm-shaken,
And sea-lashed when the tempest waxes strong,
Do I, the Culdee, Sentan, wear my days,

III

Cithara Mea

And dream my nights, in violence with God,
If haply one sad vision of my youth,
One dark experience shall but move aside,
From the dim waving curtains of my mind,
And leave me God's best gift, His peace, once
more.

Wilt hearken, for the burden of my grief
Lifts from my weary shoulders, when I tell,
Once and again, my sin and my remorse?

II

Where a dark river broadens to the sea,
Dreaming, and mirroring in inky depths
Uncolored forms of leaves and trees and sky,
There stretches inwards many weary miles
A gray moor, never lighted by the sun,
But made more desolate in summer-time,
When a wan light creeps swiftly over crags,
And darkens them, and makes the lonely hern
Blink, and shrill out for his beloved gloom.
There the black hills, cut into blacker teeth
That bite the sky, and foam with whitened mist,
Make a dark rampart from the outer world,
And bid all sweetness and all light away.
There was our lura. There the beloved cells,
Where for the weary frame was no repose;

Sentan the Culdee

No space, no warmth, no shelter from the sun.
The dews did wet us in the summer nights,
The rains did pierce us in the winter day.
Yet there was peace, and love, and God's high
grace ;

At morn, God's Blessed Bread, and in the eve
The Holy Word that sank into our hearts,
Sweetened our lips, made music in our ears.
Yet who would dream it? speak it? there, e'en
there,

Playing with bodies that were shadowless,
With souls that shared angelic purity,
The tempter came and won. Was it worth while,
When in the world outside such easy prey
Fell to his hands, to trouble us poor monks,
Whose feet already walked the pearly floors
That pave the many mansions of our God?
And yet he came, and laid a bitter siege,
And burst the bulwarks and the battlements,
Built by the midnight prayer, the burning scourge,
Around the treasure-chamber of my God,
And swept my soul, as easy as that wind
Wafts its full-bosomed burden o'er the sea,
Down to that realm of never-ending night,
Whose mighty gates, annealed with storm and fire,
Swing slowly inwards for each hapless soul,
Never swing outwards for a soul redeemed.

Cithara Mea

III

It happened thus. In the scriptorium
I labored — nay, it was not labor lost,
For labor lost its painful self in love.
The hours flew by on golden-tipped wings,
And dropped their gold and pearls on my palette,
Until I made the leading letters shine
Like jewels blazing amidst dusky hair ;
And all men stared, and in their wonder cried
Pictor Angelicus ! For me alone
Such glory could not last, for were it thus
Heaven had no guerdon, half so fair, so sweet,
As work in exile, and the love of men.
But one day dreaming o'er a faultless blue,
That rivalled heaven on its sunniest day,
And thinking would I blend it with my gold,
Or would the gentler silver suit it best,
A roll was placed before me to inscribe.
I looked the letters over wond'ringly,
Thought I had never seen such workmanship ;
Studied each line and circle, painted bird,
Symbol uncouth, and pyramid, and square ;
Serpents that leaped athwart the creamy page,
Apis, an ibis, and the mystic signs
Of Isis and Osiris ; then at once
I passed from symbols unto symbolized,

Sentan the Culdee

From words to meanings — all the hidden lore
Of Egypt, and of India, and of Greece,
Slept in this vellum, till I dreamed and dreamed,
And let my fancy wander libertine
To questionings of God and all His works, —
The great Eternal's essence and His form ;
And thence to man, as sprung from God, and
thence

To life, its source, its issues, and its end.
Was this black world, and man, its parasite,
Spun through blind space, by demon whims or
chance,

Flashed for a moment in a lurid light,
That marked its seams and wrinkled ugliness,
Then plunged in night more merciful again ?
Or did it flame a pure star in the sky,
Thronged with a radiant galaxy of souls,
Held by its angel 'fore the face of God,
Who, wond'ring at the magic of His work,
Loved His own beauteous essence all the more,
For all the wondrous beauties He had made !
Vexed with such subtleties of thought as these,
I rifled all the cabinets of God,
And in a lethargy of ecstasy,
Probed every secret cell of my own soul,
Dived into hidden crypts, and even there,
Unheeding the dread sacrilege and sin,

Cithara Mea

I sought for fragments of a life divine
Flowing in torrents from the throne of God.
'T was wrong ! 't was wrong ! I should have left
such lore
To saintly scholar, or to learned saint.

IV

Sheathing its radiance with enfolded wings,
A form of blinding light before me stood,
Looked at me, beckoned ; I arose and went.
Down through dim, hollow spaces, where the light
Flickers and fades — through ever dark'ning
realms,
Caverned and gloomy — into darkest night
Where e'en the angelic figure paled away
Into dim spectral mists of waving wings
And shadowed outstretched arms — we flashed
and came
To a great gate, annealed with storm and fire.
He smote it with his flaming sword, and, lo !
The gates swung slowly inward, and revealed
The realm of darkness, and of night and death,
The kingdom of the lost — sad souls that pine
For one dim ray, shot from that burning sun,
Which they, in happier days, stared at too free,
And gained in lieu the murkiness of hell.

Sentan the Culdee

And all the princes proud stood up to greet ;
And : " You are wounded even worse than we,
You have become like us, and your fell pride
Is brought so low, even so low as ours."
And as they rose from ebon thrones, and looked,
And spoke in voices muffled and distressed,
Dim flames would flicker, like a falling star,
From hands, and brows, and lips, and eyes, and
hair,
Then falter into blackness once again.
As a black brand, half-eaten by the fire,
Flames into yellow brightness at a breath,
Then curdles into sparks that leap and die,
So from the sooty darkness of the damned,
Whene'er they spoke or looked, or passed a sign,
A flame would reach unto the loathsome air,
Then die in midnight murkiness again.
And there was neither anger nor revenge,
Nor that tumultuous passion, that will speak
In hissing tones, through clenched teeth and lips,
Nor eyebrows lifted in dumb, silent scorn.
But, oh ! the sadness of those brilliant eyes,
The mute despair, the silent agony,
As one should say : " The weary years shall roll
Their slow and solemn burden round the sun,
And suns shall fade, and spheres be crushed and
rolled,

Cithara Mea

As a monk's parchment shrivels in the fire,
But never may we see the light again —
The living light that beats around the Throne,
And spreads throughout the universe of space,
And kindles suns, and streams through stellar voids,
To touch pale planets into lustrous moons.
New forms shall rise to fill the vacant thrones,
That stare at God — bid Him create again ;
And we, the demigods of lofty skies,
Sporting, like children, round the feet of God,
Lie here, forgotten and unknown, save when
Some novel torture is devised for us,
To make our hell more keener, and our lot
More doleful than these wretched hybrids here,
Half brute, half angel, who forswore their God,
E'en when He 'd bent Him down from His high
place,
And linked His lofty nature unto theirs.”
But when they saw upon my outstretched palm,
Which I, to deprecate their wrath and hate,
Turned towards them with humble suppliance,
The lines where holy oils were faintly traced,
And a great light broke in upon their minds,
That I, even I, was yet in truth a priest,
A great hope shone from out their sunken eyes,
As lights that, flashed along a rocky coast,
Warn, and bear hope to shipwrecked mariners.

Sentan the Culdee

V

And, lo ! they led me to an altar-throne,
Built out of blackest ebony, and draped
In blackest dyes, like dreary catafalque.
The priestly robes were black, amice and alb,
And I was clad with form, and rite, and prayer,
By black and naked acolytes of hell.
The Mass was one that I used love to say —
Introit of Sedulius, saint and bard ;
For 't would appear, the hope traditional
That Mass in hell will quench its burning fires,
Leans upon Mary's Mass — no other rite
Hath such celestial force and potency.
The rite progressed. And now the white host
lay
Like a pale planet on a sable sky,
With just a dim and mystic aureole
Where the round edge did lean upon the stone.
The mills of hell stood still — the ceaseless
round
Of woes, and weeping, and the mournful chant
Of lost souls heaved in unavailing toil.
A million eyes did burn from out the gloom,
And starred the sulphurous and sooty air,
And all the princes of the nether courts
Rose from their thrones in stateliest attitudes.

Cithara Mea

VI

I took the host into my trembling hands,
Blessed it, and with white and tremulous lips
I tried to speak the dread and sacred words.
But, lo ! my parched tongue clave unto my mouth,
I could not speak, nor cry, nor utter word,
As if a ghostly nightmare haunted me.
A whimpering trembled through the halls of hell.
Once more I tried, and prayed in thought, and
 leaned

My arms upon the altar. Deep I drew
My breath. I heard the panting of their breasts,
And felt the flashing of expectant eyes.
In vain ! My memory failed ; not one weak word
That veils our God beneath His humblest guise,
Would leave my lips. And then a stifled groan
Rolled through the vaults and architraves of hell.
A third time I essayed. All hell stood still.
I heard the beating of their hearts — the breath
Deep-drawn, and felt the heat of burning eyes
Of princes and archangels fanning me.
I drew a long deep sigh, and pursed my lips.
No ! not a word came forth, but the white host
Crumbled to dust beneath my palsied hands,
The chalice burst, and all the ruddy wine
Streamed on the floor, and flashed in ruby flames,

Sentan the Culdee

And ran through all the channels of the place,
And washed the thrones on which the princes
sate.

And God ! great God ! grant me that ne'er again,
Here or hereafter, shall I hear that wail,
That long, deep, mournful, painful, passioned wail,
That broke from heart and lip, and curving round
Swept like a tempest of untold despair
Through roofs and vaults, and architraves of hell,
And pulsing through the interminable depths
It moaned and sobbed, and swelled, and paused
and died.

Yet the proud princes never uttered word,
But leaning forward on their trembling hands
Faces that blanched beneath such dread reverse,
And crowned with aureoles of sulphurous flame,
I heard their tears hiss on the burning floors ;
And I too wept, and woke to find my tears
Had blurred and blotted all my labored work,
And — Abbot Ailbe stood, and gazed at me.

VII

“ Sentan, my child, Satan hath tempted thee,
Like wheat hath sifted thee, and kept the grain,
And left thee this poor chaff, for poor it is ” —
He pointed to the roll of Porphyry —

Cithara Mea

“ I know it well, lore with but little truth,
Opium dreams, and Orient reveries,
And all the twilight visions of the East,
The truth foreshadowing, but not the truth :
For we may doubt whether the angry lies
That hiss their fierce denial towards God,
Blaspheme His name, and contravene His word,
May yet not bear one half the ruth and dole
Borne to sad souls that do not keep the watch,
By those pale spectres of philosophy,
Specious yet false, content with half-beliefs,
That woo the fancy from the stern, cold truths,
Forged in the fiery workshops of the Lord,
But chilled by frozen contact with the world.
I know not, Sentan, whence those bitter tears,
Whether they fall as crystals from thy heart,
Broken by grief, or opened by mistrust ;
But for thy soul's sake, and to humble him,
Who in his craft hath deeply humbled thee,
Leave thou this work, thy stylus, and thy brush,
And all the wonders which thy hand has made,
Making thee, too, perhaps, high-borne and vain ;
Leave thou this laura and thy brethren dear,
And me, who love thee, though I banish thee ;
And where a high rock beetles o'er the sea,
Its shadow dark'ning at the mid-day hour
That grave of sainted Declan — there abide !

Sentan the Culdee

Thy bed — the heather, salted by sea-winds ;
Thy books — the open manuscripts of God ;
Thy food — whate'er the sea-fowl bring to thee.
Once and again, thou mayst near approach
The cells, where dwell the brethren of Ardmor,
To shrive thee, and receive the Paschal guest.
But thou shalt shun all intercourse with men,
And love the silent solitudes of God.
Perchance in some far off and distant time,
When thou, through fires of discipline and prayer,
The dim mists cleansed from thy half-blinded
 eyes,
Hast, in the sacred silence of the seas,
Pondered the dread exorbitance of God :
Thou mayst go forth to see the blinding face
Of Him, to whom the stars are blackened slags,
And angels' faces blurred and stained with sin.
Take then, O brother, take this kiss of peace
From him who loves thee, though he smiteth
 thee.
Thou knowest, I know, we shall not meet again."

VIII

And hence, upon this sullen rock, storm-shaken,
And buffeted by every wind that blows,
Do I, the Culdee, Sentan, wear my days,

Cithara Mea

And dream my nights, in violence with God.
Here is my couch — this purple bed of heath,
Tyrian in color, spiced and perfumèd ;
My canopy, the colored clouds that roll
And shake their folds from zenith unto sea,
And dye the wavelets saffron, red, and gold.
And the sweet gentle creatures of the deep,
Sea-pie and sanderling, mallard-teal and gull,
Come to me, chirping, in pretence of song,
As if to break the spell of solitude.
And when a bark comes curtseying o'er the deep,
Mariners bare their heads, and dip their flags,
Not unto me, Sentan, the sinful man,
But unto sainted Declan, him who sleeps
Where that Phœnician tower and obelisk
Sweeps with the sun from early morn to dusk —
And all the maimed, the halted, and the blind,
And they whose flesh is coated with the sin,
The sin and sorrow of dread leprosy,
Come to me, shall I say? like Him of old,
Whose hands dropped mercy, and whose sacred lips
Shed balm and fragrance on the sinful heart.
I bid them go, and wash in Declan's well ;
They go, and they are strengthened and made
whole,
Praise be to Declan, and his Most High God.
And am I tempted? Sometimes in the eves

Sentan the Culdee

Dreams of the scriptorium torture me,
For I have seen such wondrous coloring,
Such depths and shades and lights of sky and sea,
(God, the great Artist, ever humbles me)
That I would give half of my years in heaven
To catch the lights that dye the purple e'en,
And touch my vellum into another sky.

IX

Yet, had I not the holy word of God,
The rapt prophetic vision of Isai
The rhythmic sorrow of the erring king,
The tender tale of that thrice holy youth
Who loved, and was beloved of the Lord,
I should not be untaught — unlessoned.
For Nature, in her wild or gentle moods,
Reflex or echo of the realms enskied,
Preaches God's verities unceasingly.
The patient rocks that front the sun and storm,
And never chide the chafing waves beneath,
Tell me of Him, who, throned above the stars,
Looks calmly on, unfretted by the sin,
The ceaseless madness of humanity ;
And those unreasoning waters here around,
That shrink from earth, or if they do approach,
Swing their vast bulk against this stubborn rock,

Cithara Mea

What are they but the voices and the types —
The ceaseless pulsings of a restless race?
But, oh ! at night, when 'thwart the velvet pall
A silver ribbon touches pole and pole,
And I behold the myriad suns that flash
Their splendors into space, and with one voice
Volley their thunders, as they wheel and stretch
Long lines of light across the trembling sky —
Then as if some great spirit from on high,
Should twist his fingers in my hair, and lift
This poor, frail frame into the empyrean,
I float and swim in pulsing seas of light ;
From gloom to glory, and from blackened
space

Into the blinding splendors of some star,
And thence again into a night of gloom,
And thence into a radiance so serene —
A pale and tremulous ocean whose waves
Wash gently upwards, and then gently break
In murmured meekness at the throne of God.
And then I pause, and rapt from out myself,
Absorbed and lost in some deep tranquil dream,
All, all is merged in one great, blissful thought —
I am in God, and God o'ershadows me !
And then, once more, the jaded spirit flags
In its too lofty flight, and with closed wings,
Once more is prisoned in its earthly cage,

Sentan the Culdee

And once again is fronted with its sin,
And once again looks through its fleshy bars
At that sad picture, framed in rings of death —
Black rocks, gray shingle, and the sullen sea.

*So spake the man of God, the gray Culdee,
Long ere these leaden days, from which the sun
Of God's sweet Face hath vanished into night,
And in the depths His voice hath died away.*

GACHLA — THE DRUIDESS

GACHLA — THE DRUIDESS

*A RELIC of an old-time rune,
Told o'er the turf and fagot blaze,
Or in the harvest fields at noon,
In the far off, the halcyon days.*

*Pride, and a Pagan, and the Christ,
Harper and priests in kingly hall;
A youth and maid in tourney-tryst,
A blinded girl, and that is all.*

Forth from the Druid tents the challenge went :
"To all the aliens who believe in Christ,
White-stoled, white-livered, shuddering sheep
that bleat
Their piteous psalms unto a heedless sky,
But in the clash of arms, the front of fight,
Freeze the upleaping blood, nor feel the pangs
Of fierce delight, when lances leap and swords
Make summer lightning on ensanguined
clouds —

Cithara Mea

This challenge. And because your beardless
priests

Were hardly fit for tourney, where the arms
Are swift and sudden play with razored words,
That leap from sheath and scabbard of high
thought,

This challenge comes not from our bearded
sires,

Heirs and custodians of the secret lore,
That makes man's benison, and his power ;
But our dear child, child of our oaks and streams,
Begot of our great Father, Sun, and Lord of
Light,

Gachla, will meet the princeliest of your line,
And with fair words, without or fraud or guile,
Will prove the honor of her sire, the Sun,
The grave dishonor and the uncourtly gift
Of grace unto a felon-god — your gibbet-king."

Now, Patrick, of all living men most meek,
Was wroth and sore at such defiant words ;
More wroth and sore, in sooth, because he knew
The poverty of thought, the vesture foul,
The beggar's gaberdine of reasoning,
That wrapt such vain and proud philosophy.
He walked alone by silent streams, and thought,
Shall I give honor to these Pagan priests,

Gachla — the Druidess

By the obeisance of humility,
Or shall I send them scorn for their scorn?
Alas ! that the hot fires should still subsist
To forge the barbs of bitter hate and scorn !
Then he was 'ware of a soft hand that stole
Into his palm, and a soft voice that spake :
“ O Father, let me go to champion Christ.
Let the contempt of these proud, Pagan priests
Be met with scorn ! such piteous scorn that I,
Eustace, the least of all Christ's little ones,
Should go and enter these dread Druid lists,
And harness to the conquering car of Christ
Those who reject His wisdom and His love.”

The gray saint looked into the youthful eyes,
Shining with trust and lustrous with desire ;
The gray saint ran his thin and withered hand
Through the ripe clusters of the gold that hung
In rings around the temples of the boy.
The gray saint said : “ Ay, go, for so God wills ;
Go forth, and fear not knife, nor lance, nor sword,
Nor spell of darkness, nor the woven charm,
Nor terror of the night, nor thunder crash,
Raised by the wiles of these grave Pagan seers.
Nought shall molest thee, though the trump of
doom
Should clang and clash upon thy smitten ears ;

Cithara Mea

And all the sprites of darkness should arise,
Encompass thee with death, and stifle thee
With the uprisen smoke and stench of hell.
But one thing shalt thou fear — the subtle spells,
And the dark charms of this proud Druid girl.
For, vanquished as she shall be, she will try
Soft assonance of voice, soft pleading dalliance.
Heed not the curve of arm, the colored lip,
The snaky hair, the piteous eloquence
Of eyes that pray thee, 'Let me conquer thee.'
But if the weakness of our common flesh,
That bears its treason to the worms and death,
Should bid thee yield, and sink beneath her wiles,
Thou knowest the sign, the mystic sign that
flings

Dread consternation 'mongst the nether powers.
Forget it not ; but humble these proud hosts,
Come back victorious unto me and Christ."

The great Sun spun throughout the empty sky,
And from his chariot-wheels did leap the flames
That burned a pathway for the fiery god.
He looked through skies and seas, and space, and
dwelt

On the fair form and the uplifted head
Of one who was a queen unto her race.
Her raven hair gleamed purple in the glow

Gachla — the Druidess

That made the rubies in her armlets burn ;
And her dark eyes shone lustrous from the eaves
Of darker brows, now bent in silent scorn
On Eustace, child and athlete unto Christ.
The great oaks threw their serpent branches
wide,

And dappled all the faces of the priests —
Grim priests, that stood immovable and still,
As the white icicles of beards that fell
Like the long sweep of frozen cataracts.
And through the gloom and silence that did chill
The heart of Eustace, gleamed some fair sweet
buds,

The white flower-faces of the little maids,
Who held the long train of their sombre queen,
And wondered, wide-eyed, at the venturous youth,
And gave him pity for his dolorous fate.
And farther back, amongst the midnight shades,
Glinted a spear-top or a helmet crest
Of silent warriors, who ringed with steel
The sad death-circle of the Druid rites.
For here was placed a rough-hewn dolmen stone,
Shouldered by rough-hewn props of syenite ;
And here the dial, that marked the fatal hour,
And here the cup that held the victim's blood.
And Eustace saw and shuddered, and the girl
Smiled, and adjusting serpent necklet, said :

Cithara Mea

"Who art thou?" and the great *anguineum*
rocked,
And swayed around the milk-white of her neck ;
And the gold serpents that entwined her wrists
Drew their cold coils together ; and the spleen
And acid of their venom'd eyes did spit,
And seemed to soil the vesture virginal,
And the pure sweetness of the Christian child.
"Eustace," he said, "the least of all the lambs
That find their shelter in the fold of Christ."
"Eustace !" she cried, "Eustace !" she lisped
again,
Lifting red lips to hiss her angry scorn.
And the light Latin tripped along her tongue,
Amid the roar of Gaelic gutturals,
As chirp of sea-lark o'er the smoking sea,
Above the thunders of the shoaling surge.
"Why did your gray-beard priest send here a girl
To tilt and tourney with a Druidess?
Go back, child, to your cradle and your nurse,
And tell your whimpering and droning priests
That Gachla, child and priestess of the Sun,
Disdains to shield the honor of her God
From such small measurement of disrepute
As beardless boy or trembling girl can mete."
Then Eustace, stung by all her taunts, or driven
By the white paraclete that held his soul,

Gachla—the Druidess

Made answer calmly : “ Worthy cause doth need
But little championing. ’T is the doubt and dread
That clamors for assurance or for proof.
In the high forehead and the regal front
Of day there shineth one particular star,
Which needs no purchased eloquence to prove
That there it is ; and thence come warmth and
light

Unto all things that see, and touch, and feel.
And so we reason, work was never wrought
Except by cunning hand and dext’rous sleight ;
And never hand was guided but by mind ;
And the vast mind that rules the world is God ! ”
So they crossed swords ; and so was Gachla ’ware
That from the lips of sucklings and of babes
Might issue hoary wisdom and high truth.
And she recoiled and cautious grew, and then,
Veiling her anger under velvet words,
Like wary advocates, began to plead : —
“ By your own words I judge you — by the plea
That all our worship and our reverence
Are due to the vast central mind that holds
In lease the lives of men, and tree, and shrub,
And all that lives and breathes beneath the moon.
Life giveth life ; and life is but the heat,
The inmost fire that pierceth all the earth,
And floweth in balmy streamlets that divide

Cithara Mea

Through veins and wrinkled ducts of trees and
men.

In the deep earth it hides ; it sleeps in clouds,
And wakens in a thousand flaming messengers
Of wrath and ruin to a trembling world.

It is a child and servant on our hearths,
An angry Titan in its yellow rage.
And 't is a demigod that springs from brain
And loins of him, our father, and our king,
Source of all light and heat, our God, the Sun."

And Eustace, reassured, made answer thus : —
"You greatly err in mingling soul and sense,
Matter and mind, the artist and his art.
The torch is not its bearer, and the swords
Of light and heat that leap from out the sheath —
The fiery sheath and scabbard of the sun —
Are but the weapons and the tools of Him
Who swings the orbéd furnace by a thread
And rings His fingers with His satellites.
Lo, how He veils the splendors with His mists,
And blunts the vivid arrows of the heat,
And gently from the crucible distils
The balm of warmth to all the chilly earth.
Have not your fathers told you how 't was
wrought?

How a great darkness folded all the skies,

Gachla — the Druidess

And a Voice pierced it, and the Voice was Light.
And riven clouds rolled backwards from the
Throne,

And the great Sun upleapéd at the Voice,
And wheeled his fiery circuit through the skies.
That was the light of sense ; and then arose
Man, shaped in mind, and moulded like to God.
And in his soul there shone another light,
Which made Him arbiter and king of all,
And drew His trembling subjects to His feet.
That was the light of reason. Last there came
The Light supernal, that enlighteneth
Whoso cometh into this nether star ;
And that was Christ, whose burning love for men
Hath borne of His high Godhead the eclipse,
Until the day when sun and gleaming stars
Shall hide their borrowed light, and all the skies,
And all the furthestmost domains of space,
And all the high empyrean of heaven,
Shall glow and pulsate in the living light,
That streams from the unveiled face of Him,
Lord of all Life and Light to all His world.”
He ceased ; the iron circle closer drew,
And a strange light shone from the starred eyes
Of all the Pagan children who had heard
This new evangel of the Light and God.
But when the angry Druidess beheld

Cithara Mea

The soft dew's gleaming in the violets
Of eyes that erewhile withered at the sight
Of blood and violence, she drew back and called
The slaves of all her witchcraft and her wiles.

A dusk came down, and all the feathered trees
Shivered and drew together with a moan,
That seemed to breathe from out the earth, and
creep

In trembling leaf, and chilled blood of men.
And all the trembling pageant drew away,
And the child-faces paled into the gloom ;
And even the mailed warriors vanished.
The youth and maiden stood alone, while deep
Called unto deep of darkness and of death.
Then a pale dawn drew round the Druid girl,
Like marish phosphorescence 'gainst the night ;
Her eyes gleamed out in globes of yellow light,
And a dim nebule trembled in her hair,
Like demilune of goddess, or the nimbus starred,
That breaks from the soaked brimstone of the lost.
She shook her snaky tresses, and they fell,
And coiled and crept around her naked feet,
And the great serpent armlets loosed their folds,
And stretched in lengthened coils upon her breast ;
And the *anguineum* burst, and from its shell
Slid the black reptile, and embraced her neck

Gachla — the Druidess

In burnished folds, whilst the moist, poisoned
mouth

Sought hers in slimy lust, and the forked tongue
Flickering and red licked all the silvery flame
That lit the moonlike pallor of her face.

The darkness deepened, and the painful moan
Of the black forests rose, and shrilled aloud,
And all the tortured earth shrivelled and sank
Under the glance importunate and stern
Of the red eye that glared from out the mists,
And burned the midnight murkiness of heaven.

Then a deep thunder boomed along the earth
In sound-waves, ever-widening, that rolled
As roll exultant drums, when lightning spits
Impartial terrors on the quiv'ring earth.
And the deep booming grew articulate,
As lips unlocked unto a sudden speech,
And through the hell of darkness sang the choir
Of the dread priestess, and the shamed Sun : —

THE HYMN OF DARKNESS

Om !

O wheel, who settest thy faces 'gainst the stars,
Whose golden hooves crush out the silvern bars
That lean athwart the lines of night and day,
Avenge us of this new God, Christ, we pray,

Om !

Cithara Mea

Om !

Lord of all light, whose swift and golden glance
Breaks in prismatic light earth's starry trance,
Reveal thy face, and show thy dreaded wrath
On this poor, piteous worm who thwarts thy path,
Om !

Om !

O thou, whose burning plumage stretches far,
Flaming with eyes, and every eye a star,
Lean down and shrivel in thy lambent fire
This moth who braveth death and thy dread ire,
Om !

Om !

Thou drinkest from the deep, and thy red lip,
Froths from the foam-flake, where thy mouth doth
sip,
Descend and taste the chalice of his blood,
We sprinkle o'er thy oaks and thwart thy flood,
Om !

Om !

Let them take back to th' Orient their dead God,
There where our fathers' burning feet had trod ;
No dead god ; but thee, our living god, we praise,
Thee, through the tranced nights, the quenchless
days,

Om !

Gachla — the Druidess

And sudden, unseen hands reached forth and
placed
The fearless youth on the dread altar-stone,
And the white priests drew slowly round and
spoke
Their incantations, and the spells of gods
Brought from the ancient Babylon, and sung
For centuries round the golden god who gazed
At his twelve acolytes that dumbly stood
On the green sward in far and famed Moy-Slecht.
And, as their wrath grew with the spoken spell,
And chid their hands, reluctant and upraised,
A swift knife flashed like to the forkéd tongue
That licks and lights the thunder-blackened cloud.
And the youth closed his eyes, and thought of
Him
Whose breast was pierced by the blind soldier's
lance,
When the same thunders pealed, and lightnings
flashed
Around the deicides of Golgotha.
And, lo ! the heavens cleared, the dark clouds
rolled
In silent files adown the resplendent west ;
The lance-heads gleamed against the forest oaks ;
The gentle eyes of all the maidens shone
With all the light of a too sudden joy

Cithara Mea

That leaps upon the leaden feet of pain.
And Gachla looked upon the Christian youth
And smiled, and with more treacherous wiles she
said :

“Eustace, thou 'rt brave ; come, and be one
with us ;

Thou hast purloined from archives of our gods
The central secret of our creed and race, —
How to be brave in pain, serene in death,
Thine eye untroubled, and thy pulse unstirred
Amid the terrors of the dark, the threats
Of unseen gods, and all the dark estate
Of the great powers that rule the sky and sea.”

But the brave youth, repeating back her smile,
Unmoved by her false praise, as by her power,
Looked in her glowing eyes, and calmly said :

“I have not stolen the secret of your gods :
Your gods are demons, crushed beneath the heel
Of the great Woman, from whose womb there
sprang

Light unto saints, and lightning to the lost.
Far in the early dawn he played a child
Before His Father's throne in the empyrean ;
The Spirit looked on Him with love and smiled.
And the vast seas of space were round them, and
th' abyss

Unruffled by this vagrant ship, called time.

Gachla — the Druidess

And the Son's place was in a farthest cloud,
And His tent stretched along a silent shore,
Tideless and waveless, for there was no time.
But like a cedar was He lifted up,
And like a cypress by the Syrian sea.
And then Time came ; and 'thwart the speech-
less Light

Fluttered fair forms, who envied Him, and fell.
Then fairer forms more faithful, who became
Servitors willing to the youthful King.
But, one day playing in the fields of Heaven,
He looked and saw the Father's lightnings strike
One tiny world in the far seas of space.
And He beheld two forms, whose altered shape
Were like, and yet most unlike, unto God's ;
But they were stricken sore, and sore ashamed ;
And their thrice regal foreheads bent them low,
And watched the dry earth drink their bitter
tears.

Then the young God was smit with sudden pain,
And yearned for the loneliness of that race.
For, mark you, great souls tire of changeless joy,
And the eternal sweets of peace and love
Cloy on the loftier appetites that embrace
Pain, and the bitter sweets of sadness blent
In one rude chalice, wreathed with the rue,
And inctured with the myrrh of human tears.

Cithara Mea

He looked upon His Father's face ; 't was dark,
And yet His frowning forehead answered : ' Go ! '
And the young God stooped to this nether earth,
And hid Himself behind the lov'liest veil, —
The heart of a most pure and holy maid.
And then He walked amongst men. They knew
him not.

Words from His gentle lips did oft distil
Comfort and balm unto grief-stricken hearts ;
And His most holy fingers touched the sick,
The leprous, without scorn or shrinking dread
The crumbling and polluted flesh doth raise.
And all men loved Him and all women wept
Over their babes and lisped His sanctity.
But the fierce bearded priests held far aloof,
And knew not this was the great promised King
Whom all the seers and Princes of the race
Had yearned to see ; but the far doom of God
Must not be set aside by human hands.
They took that gentle Son and with rude gibes
And ruder buffets they exalted Him
On a high throne of suffering and of scorn.
They wreathed His forehead with contumely,
Made the cold iron fester through His hands,
And flung the burden of His tortured frame
On feet that the fierce iron gauntlets stung.
And then they drew apart and mocked Him —

Gachla — the Druidess

They whose very leprosy He had cured,
They whose very madness He had healed,
They whose very palsied limbs He smote
Unto fresh life and smoothed suppleness —
They mocked at him, the wounded One, and said,
‘Vah! thou magician, use Thy secret arts,
And save Thyself as Thou didst erstwhile save
The fools that trusted in Thy feigned power.’
And then a piteous cry of woe did break
From out the wilderness of grief that lay
On His great heart, thus riven and bereft.
And in that cry which pierced the thunder-cloud,
That hung o’er all that charnel-house of skulls,
His soul went forth. And the loud thunder
crashed,
And lightnings flickered o’er the stricken crowd,
And they did beat their breasts and whimpering
cry :
‘This was a just man whom our envy smote.’
But the dumb earth travailed and tore its breast,
And rocked and swung like tempest-driven sea,
And broke the prison bars of graves that kept
In durance all the souls of all the blest.
And the great sheeted ghosts did walk abroad,
And haunt the homes of all the deicides.
Who struck their breasts and cried most mourn-
fully,

Cithara Mea

‘True, we have sinned, and this the Christ is just.’
But the pale body shone amidst the gloom
Of Golgotha ; and the red rain did weep
On his meek mother and one contrite one — ”

But here while Eustace told in mournful rhyme
This sad death-story of his God the King,
A sound of fury broke upon his words,
The gathered rage of all the Pagan host,
Who cried, “ The cowards, the lily-livered stags,
Who took high favors and requited them,
With rudest treachery and ungenerous meed
Of wounds and blood to him, the kind, the good !
Would Heaven that we were on that high place
Of skulls ; these treacherous churls should swing
beside

Their victim, and their coward blood should shrink
Into the sewers of their city doomed
To desolation for their dastard crime.”
But all the little Pagan maids did weep,
And their loud sobs did echo through the gloom,
For all the suffrance of the gentle Christ.

And Eustace saw the tawny tiger-lights
In Gachla’s eyes fade into happy moons
Of mystery and mournfulness as she drew near,
And flung the serpent fascination of her smile
Over the guileless youth. She stretched her arms,

Gachla — the Druidess

White as the pure and fragile *canaban*,
That floats round black bog and sullen mere ;
Her lips did tremble as with ill-borne pain,
And her sweet voice shook out a treacherous
threne,

Such as our women wail above their dead :
“ Oh, Eustace, thou hast conquered us to Christ ;
Thy gentle tale has wrung our stubborn hearts,
And nailed them to the feet of Him who died.
Oh, Eustace, come and teach us more of Christ,
Teach our rude kerns swiftly to unlearn
The fierce and angry art of dealing death.
Unman them if thou wilt, and let them weep
At sight of gaping wounds and pallid death.
Come turn our shields to ploughshares, let the hilt
Of blazing swords be buried in the deep,
And let the children of the Gael forget
Their vast inheritance of love and hate.
Let all be smothered and submerged in love,
Such love as welcomes thee to liveried pomp,
And all the graces of our royal home.”
But as the youth, now flattered by her words,
And thinking of his triumph with lawless pride, —
How he had won the Pagan unto Christ, —
Looked in her face, he saw her wondrous eyes
Bend towards him veiled behind a silver mist
Of tears that swam as soft as April skies.

Cithara Mea

And the dread lights, that baleful shone erstwhile,
Took on the tender grays that shade the holms,
Where all the weary trees drop down their dead,
Yellow and blanchéd by the drooping thought
And musing sadness of the year's decline.
And Gachla stretched towards him her bare arms
Piteous ; and one shred of hair broke loose
And brushed the golden temples of the boy.
He felt his soul swoon in some dread delight,
And all his being was slowly drawn abroad
By some most gentle but imperious force ;
And down the horrid gulfs of sin and death
His popped senses dragged his shrinking soul :
And God drew back his hand, stung with the pride
Of the young victor athlete.

At that hour

Vesperal, calm, as day kneels to the night,
Patrick, the weary saint, stood by the stream
Where the boy knelt, and drew a forced assent.
The aged brow was troubled, and the eyes
Filled with that aching light that seeks to pierce
Beyond the quivering curtains of the light.
And a great sorrow brimmed the crystal cup
Of the strong heart that beat but for the Christ.
And, lifting up his tremulous voice, he cried :
“ Where art thou, Eustace ? Where art thou, O
my child ? ”

Gachla — the Druidess

And, as the boy drew down the breaking gulf,
Piloted by the starry gleams that shone
From Gachla's tear-brimmed eyes, and strongly
rowed

By the white arms of the Druidic girl,
He heard a far-off voice above the wastes,
And his own name was called from out the night.

And all his senses woke, and the dread spell
Was broken, and the glamour of the face
And form of Gachla yielded to the voice :
And Eustace struggled, but her beauty hung
Around him like a net ; and he, enmeshed,
Flung out his piteous arms unto the skies,
And drew in the thick air the Sacred Sign,
Dreaded by sepulchred and unsceptred gods.

“ Quickly, bring hither lights, ye base-born slaves !
Our god hath taken umbrage at our ways,
And cloaked himself in hoodlets of the night,
Or leaped adown the crenellated hills,
And hid him in the lap of mother-sea.
Quick, for the sooty night is thick and black,
She rose so sudden from her smutty couch,
She hath forgot her circlet of the stars,
And her tiara of the demilune.”

Then great fear fell on all, for the fierce sun
Was sifting his red beams through thickest leaves,

Cithara Mea

And painting with long pencils of his rays
The bald, bare brows of turrets and of trees.
But the bewildered and the wandering eyes
Stared into nothing, as a dreaming poet
Feels all the weight of consecrated brow
Pressing the light from too-encumbered eyes,
That grope through space, and lose their searching light

Swallowed and soaked in the absorbent gloom,
That reigns o'er all the mysteries of space.
And priests and maids and churls did pity her,
Even when again, raging 'gainst the wall
Of blackness that stood still before her eyes,
Palpable, impenetrable, locking out her soul
Forevermore from commerce with her kind,
The fierce Druidic priestess smote her hands,
And cried imperiously to priests and churls :
"What aileth ye? Hath this too sudden pall,
And cloak of darkness of the witchéd night,
Emparalyzed your rebel hands, and tied
Into too willing knots your palsied feet?
Go thither, and let the fragrant pine-knot flare,
And let the earth-drawn light illumine the night,
And fling into her face the crescent glow
Of stars of earth, where heaven's stars have failed."
Then a deep murmur smote her list'ning fears,
Bade them leap back upon her soul, and there

Gachla — the Druidess

Kindle dark dread, where panic was unknown.
And straight, the aged priest arose and said :
" Gachla, my child, thou peerless and unpaired,
For who was ever like thee since the dawn
Of thy young reason kindled the white light
That trembled in thy cheek, and in thine eyes?
Some Christian wiles surround thee, and the gods
Of this young Christian seer have blinded thee ;
For thy great god and ours doth still hold sway
Over the heavens whose empurpled head
Anticipates in grief his near decay.
His dying fingers tease thy lustrous hair,
Flush and make roseate thy forehead's snows."
So his voice echoed ; and all held back their breath,
As at some sudden crisis in their lives,
To see what blindly weaving Fates could do
Unto their stricken priestess and their queen.

" Father," she said ; " Father," she murmured low,
Summoning her scattered and dissolvéd strength,
And fusing into calmness all the fires
That burned molten, like quench'd thunderbolts ;
" Lead me from hence ; " and placing, like a child,
One piteous hand in his outstretchéd palm,
And shading with the other th' extinguished lights
Of her great eyes that once could star the night
With their too lustrous beauty, she went forth,

Cithara Mea

As a young soul that, disembodied,
Tests with its sinking nerves the aerial bridge
That spans in space the two eternities ;
So went she forth, her blind face to the sun,
Her white feet testing for the creviced chasm,
Her right hand curved to eaves for darkened eyes,
And then stretched, calling, calling to the night,
To push its dread obstructions from her path.
And all her little maidens followed her,
Now looked at her, and now looked back in fear
At the young Christian athlete, who, amazed
At his own weakness and the strength of Christ,
Passed silent through the statued, mail-clad ranks,
And conquering, yet conquered, by his pride,
Sought the great Saint, and kissed his sandalled feet,
And told with sobs that shook, with words that
burned,
The story of the tourney and the tryst.

*So runs the rude, archaic tale,
Told in the ingle-nooks at night,
Wherever breathes the sea-borne Gael,
Whose legends leak into the light ;
And tell of deeds, fearsome and dark,
Of spells wrought out by demon hands,
When through the world was borne the ark
Of faith to rest on western sands.*

HYMN TO SPRING

HYMN TO SPRING

I

O EARTH, awake from thy slumbers !
She cometh to thee o'er the hills.
From the chambers of the south wind,
From glad reaches of the sea.
She hath breathed on brown mosses,
And, lo ! a star shines there ;
She had touched the gnarled branches —
They are pearled and gemmed with buds.
And where black boles strike deeply,
A coronal of purple flowers,
Shy, and sweet, and incense-breathing,
Leaps to the laugh of the south wind,
Shakes the warm dew from their cheeks,
And sets birds and men dreaming
Of days gone by, and of childhood,
Shy, and sweet, and love-enchanted.
O Earth, awake from thy slumbers !
Spring cometh to thee.

II

Hearken, O Earth ! to thy Psalmist,
Spring singeth to thee !

Cithara Mea

From the tawny throats of bird-minstrels,
Muffled and shielded from cold,
Lest one faintest chord should cipher,
Or one sweetest melody falter
In her psalms and wood-litanies ;
From the gurgle and murmur of streamlets,
That spring into laughter and song
Through the broken shackles of ice-floes,
And the curved domes of the snows ;
From the clapping of hands in the woodlands,
And the buds leaning o'er to each other
To whisper the glad gratulations,
Or echo the glad hallelujahs :
In symphonies soft and majestic,
In cadenced and resonant anthems,
And wild and unmeasured voluntaries.
Listen, O Earth ! to thy Psalmist :
Spring singeth to thee !

III

Arise, O Earth, for thy Priestess,
Spring, cometh to thee !
She hath put on the mitre of gladness,
And her vestments are weighted with flowers, —
God's golden embroidery.
Where her sandalled feet touch the meadows,

Hymn to Spring

A print of gold and of saffron
Lies beneath the grasses embedded.
Crocus, and lily, and violet,
The shy, sweet children of darkness,
Peep through the brown moist ridges ;
Careless, but living and breathing.
The bells of the lilac tremble ;
And up from the steaming grasses,
The hyacinth poureth his incense
At the feet of his priestess and queen.
And she, with her solemn worship
Of prayer, and of praise, and the burning
Of perfumed woods, and the spices
That breathe on the tremulous air,
Grows strong, as her King in the heavens
Widens the arch of his circuit,
And pours the life from his bosom,
Till the shy, meek maiden of springtime,
The gentle Sibyl and psalmist,
Waxes ruddy and brown in the sunshine,
And from priestess of birds and of streams,
Grows to the stature of strength and of scorn,
Dishevelled, and splashed with the blood of the
wine-press, —
The flame-haired Moenad,
The wild-eyed Bacchante,
Of summer and fruit and song.

IN THE MART

11

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IN THE MART

I

“**W**HO art thou?” for he idly strolled
 Into the idle market-place,
Where everything was weighed with gold,
 And greed looked out from every face.

II

“Thou art a stranger here ! what wares
 Bringest thou in to the world’s mart ? ”
He saw their faces were grooved with cares ;
 That a lump of gold was every heart.

III

Weary he turned aside ; and they said :
 “ Now, thou art a fool, for we beckoned thee,
To show thy merchandise here outspread,
 To buy and to sell in equity.”

IV

“ Alas ! ” he said, “ I have but a song, —
 A song for birds and clouds and skies ;
For the nimble shapes that leap and throng
 The mirrored lakes of the children’s eyes.

Cithara Mea

V

"I have nought you would value : they 're idle
words,
Unless they sink in a certain soil.
What would you, gray beards, with trill of birds?
With songs of streams, O ye sons of toil? "

VI

"Nay, pipe us a song," they said ; " we 're tired,
And would listen and lean for thy idle word ;
And, mark you, we hold your minstrelsy hired,
You 'll be paid in gold, for the notes we 've
heard."

VII

Then he took his pipe and chaunted low
A melody soft as the soft spring winds,
When the lambs do leap, and the violets blow,
And the ice no longer the prattle binds

VIII

Of the brook in the meadow, where every curve
Shadows a lakelet, deep and clear,
And the minnows hide, and the troutlets swerve,
And the long, lithe eels in the sands appear.

In the Mart

IX

But the mart was weary, and wearily said :
 “ Pipe us a song of the years gone by ;
Thy notes are dull as the ring of lead,
 Pipe us the songs that are silvery.”

X

Then he sang of the days long, long ago,
 The brave old years of chivalry,
When men were men, not slaves bent low
 O'er the dust of the golden alchemy.

XI

But they stopped their ears, and angrily cried :
 “ Let the dead ghosts sleep in their winding-
 sheets,
Pipe us a song of the years untried,
 Let us know how the pulse of the future beats.”

XII

Then he sang of the years that are speeding on,
 From the dim, gray future, that looms ahead,
Like the sheeted rains that weep and are gone,
 Whipped by the wings of the storm outspread.

Cithara Mea

XIII

And he saw but gloom, and the red, red rain
Dripped from the clouds, and the thunder
crashed, —
The thunder of war, — it had come again,
To sweep the floors where the Godhead threshed

XIV

The wheat from the chaff ; for men grew old
And wrinkled and blear-eyed with their lust,
Their manhood wasted in search for gold,
Their honor trailed in the yellow dust.

XV

But the merchants shouted aloud, " Get hence !
Thou croaking seer, we 'll have none of thee ;
The bells of a fool be thy recompense,
To ring with thy dismal threnody ! "

XVI

Then the poet stept out from the world's mart,
And his soul leapt up to the clear blue sky,
And his lips rang out the song of his heart,
And the sweet birds challenged his minstrelsy.

In the Mart

XVII

And down the valleys, shy and low,
Hiding their sweets, as a child that hides
The sweets of her face, and the amber glow
Of her hair, where the glint of the sunbeams
bides,

XVIII

He piped, and the reeds in the river-bed
Rustled and sang as he passed by,
And the wild rose lifted her fragrant head,
And breathed him love for his melody.

XIX

And all sweet things of earth and air
Followed the singer, piping sweet,
And he shook from his soul the dust and care
Caught from the soil of the teeming street.

XX

And once he stood on the mountain crest
Where ever the trill of the birds was hushed ;
But the lordly eagle had built his nest,
And the peaks by the prisoning ice were
crushed.

Cithara Mea

XXI

And a cloud swooped down, and clothed him
In the white pure robes of God's elect,
And his tongue was silent ; his eyes grew dim
Though he stood, 'fore the face of God, erect.

XXII

And a voice from the cloud — a spirit-voice —
Breathed in accents of joy and grace
Heaven's lofty sanction for call and choice,
And the cloud drew back, and, lo ! — God's
Face !

XXIII

But the merchants slept in the dusty mart,
And their lids were red from the popped gold,
And a lump of earth was each silent heart,
And for this, their souls they had pawned and
sold.

THE LASCARS

THE LASCARS

I

THEY cried : "O Captain, let us leave
These foggy shores, and leaden skies,
Where the wild, moaning waves upheave
Their hands against the pale moonrise.

II

"Why tarry we? Beyond the bar
The broad sea beckons, pointing south,
And, lo ! above, the mariner's star
Gleams ruddy at the harbor's mouth.

III

"How breathe the spiced breezes where
The purple skies lean down to kiss
The purple waves : where fires uptear,
And soothe again to deeper bliss !

IV

"And the moist cheeks of men are fanned
By palms that lift their open hands,
And dreaming wavelets, iris-spanned,
Murmur and swoon on silver sands !

Cithara Mea

V

"The tropic children, nude and dun,
Plunge 'mid the coralled pink sea-flowers,
Swarth with the umber of the sun,
And laughing with the laughing hours.

VI

"We see our adobe huts arise,
Plumage of birds in golden thatch,
The welcome in our children's eyes,
The quick uplifting of the latch ;

VII

"And the dark, lovelit eyes that shine
From dusk to dawn, from dawn to dusk, —
Lamps that illumine our sea-girt shrine —
Our fragrant shores, our isles of musk.

VIII

"And here in icebound seas we grieve,
Resent the lot which Fate has cast ;
O Captain ! let 's the anchor heave,
And clothe with clouds the shiv'ring mast."

IX

Ah ! well, they woke the anchor's sleep,
In its far bed of ooze and slime ;
They woke the echoes of the deep,
Shrilling aloud the mariner's rhyme.

The Lascars

X

They clothed the complaining mast
With white clouds of the flapping sail,
And down the harbor bight they passed,
And whistled for the sleeping gale.

XI

Their proud bark spurned the teasing wave,
Lit with the ruddy mariner's star ;
And then — leaped down its gulping grave,
Smote by the iron harbor bar, —

XII

The ribbed and wrinkled harbor bar,
Where moaned the muffled traitor wave,
And where the ruddy, torch-like star
Lighted the lascars to their grave.

XIII

Ah me ! why did they choose to leave
The fog-girt shores : the skies of lead ?
Answer, ye moaning waves, that heave
Your hands above the silent dead !

SPIRIT-VOICES

SPIRIT-VOICES

RED sunset on the Ligurian mere !
The brown sails flap against the mast,
From mariners' lips a throb of prayer,
Trembling in thanks for perils passed.

How sweetly the rough voices ring
O'er sunlit wave and glassy prow !
How fresh the evening breezes spring
From where on yonder Ethiop brow

Of queenly Night tiaras flame,
A coronal of starry gleams,
As if the pallid sky became
A broken sea of golden streams.

A gray mist on the Ligurian mere !
And from the bosom of the mist
The whisper of a breathed prayer
For hands unclasped and lips unkissed.

Cithara Mea

The sailors creep adown the sea,
With open eyes that stare in fear ;
They dread the mist and mystery,
They cry for cape and headland clear.

But hark ! from out the curtained gloom
Pierce sounds that thrill and shrill and soar,
More welcome than the cannon's boom
That grumbles down the sea-washed shore.

Hark, Pietro ! Gioacchimo, list !
That is our Maddalena's voice ;
It shakes the curtains of the mist ;
And thou, grim Salvador, rejoice !

That is thy child's contralto clear,
Gurgling like nested nightingale ;
Now, brothers, smooth the folds of care,
Sing out, we furl the hanging sail.

Ave Maria ! Holy Maid !
If brown hands clasp the sailor's neck,
If curls nestle, tossed and frayed,
Ere yet the mariners leap the deck,

'T was thy sweet Name, called from the mist,
Thy Face that starred the curtained gloom,
Drew to this safe and sacred tryst
From out the shadow of the tomb.

Spirit-Voices

And so, across the sea of years,
Its future curtained, wave from wave,
We creep to catch with strained ears
A voice to cheer — a sign to save.

And, lo ! where Life's great tidal voice
Lips to the far eternal shore,
Trembles from sister lips — Rejoice !
Thy voyage, O sailor soul, is o'er !

Ave Maria ! Holy Maid !
To thy sweet Name we furl the sail,
And ship the oar, — no more afraid
Of traitor fog or treacherous gale.

MY ROSE

MY ROSE

A JUNE SONG

O ROSE ! my Rose ! O passionate heart of
the Rose !

Why am I tempted to crush thee, O Rose sur-
passingly sweet ?

Thy breath is of Sharon's vales, thy petals dreamily
close,

With the blush of a child when she bows in love
at her Father's feet.

And thy beauty leads me afar, O Rose ! pale,
perfuméd Rose !

To lands where the Sungod rules, and smites
with a breath of desire

The cheeks of maidens — the flowers, that lean
for a moment's repose

On the lap of the leaves that flash, but drink not
the flame of his fire.

And, oh ! for the languor of peace, my Rose !
my beautiful Rose !

For a fretless, passionless heart, and the shade of
a feathered palm ;

Cithara Mea

For the cool, dim aisles where ever a zephyr of
Eden blows ;
And the silvery bells of the fountain break on the
convent calm.

But what dost thou here, my Rose, my pale and
languishing Rose ?
Thy petals are soiled with slime from these al-
chemists' forges of ours ;
And shrunk with the shrieks that arise from the
fierce and passionate throes
Of men and machines that in darkness beat out
the desolate hours.

And thus am I tempted to crush thee, O Rose,
my beautiful Rose !
Thou art here but an exiled waif ; I will kill thee,
and thou shalt go
To thy home ; 't is a crime, but who will blame,
if for thee I choose
For the shrieks, the songs of the birds ; for the
slime, white vases of snow.

BE HUSHED, YE BELLS!

BE HUSHED, YE BELLS!

THE bells break out upon the air,
And hurt us with their throbbing pain
Of memories that, gaunt and sere,
Come thronging to the wild refrain,

That chides them with affected joy, —
Gray ghosts that in the cabinets
Have stared at the gay Hours' employ
With stonied face of dead regrets.

Hush, O ye bells! Silence is sweet!
She lets us idly think and dream;
And surely dreaming is most meet
For souls that, on the slumb'rous stream

Of Time, float down the enchanted wave
That dies on the enchanted sea,
Whose farthest crested ripples lave
The cloud-shores of eternity.

Cithara Mea

Go back, grim spectres of the past !
Relax your sightless, stony stare ;
Call back your memories that o'ercast
Our sunshine with a cloud of care.

Leave us our present heritage, —
The leafy promise of our hope ;
Even the bare, unsunned presage
Of eyes that stare and hands that grope.

Only draw down your heaviest veil,
And cloak your past of horrid shapes ;
But shake the folds from which the pale
And pluméd Dove of Hope escapes.

And let her sail adown the wave,
And let her sleep with plumage furled, —
Be hushed, ye bells ! We pilgrims crave
The peace that sleeps on yonder world.

TRISTESSE

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TRISTESSE

I

I ASKED — 't was foolish asking — why the sea
Moans to the midnight ; and along the sands,
As 't were to dramatize her threnody,
Falls, and flings wildly forward her white hands.

The answer came : 'T is not the midnight sea
That moans ; the sound of sorrow is in thee.

II

I asked — 't was foolish asking — what outspreads
This veil of gloom athwart the silent lea,
Save where the osiers whisper in their beds
Waving faint pennants, as the breezes flee.

The answer came : The twilight loneliness
Shadows and echoes but thine own distress.

III

I asked — 't was foolish asking — why this eve,
Ablaze with joyous fires from sea to sea,
Vocal with songs of birds that never grieve,
Should yet wear nought but sadness unto me.

The answer came : Chide not sweet Nature's
face,
Thou that dost lack the secret of her grace !

Cithara Mea

IV

I asked — 't was foolish asking — why this child
Stares, with such solemn sadness in his eyes,
As if he scanned the desert, lone and wild,
Of the gray life that far before him lies.

The answer came : There 's nought of sadness
there,

Thou seest but shadows of thine own despair !

V

And then I asked — 't was foolish — my own
soul,

What is the secret of thy dire distress?

Whence are the sombre clouds that round thee
roll?

Untouched by faintest ray of life's largess?

The answer came : Ask not, but star the gloom ;
Let Love, as flowers the dusk, thy night
perfume.

SWALLOWS OF ALLAH

13

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SWALLOWS OF ALLAH¹

SWALLOWS of Allah! unfurl your white wings,
Come to us, strangers, o'er the friendless sea,
Welcomed by Islam and its chivalry,
For bene of all your hallowed minist'rings,
Swallows of Allah !

Swallows of Allah ! hither wing your flight
Over the barren and mysterious sea ;
Where have ye nested? Whither did ye flee?
Leaving gray shadows and the winter's night,
Swallows of Allah !

Swallows of Allah ! whilst ye dwelt afar
Behind the billows of the broken sea,
Your names made songs for Moslem minstrelsy
Over the long chibouque and samovar,
Swallows of Allah !

¹ The name given by the Turkish soldiers to the French Sisters of Charity.

Cithara Mea

Swallows of Allah ! the dusk of Arab eyes
 Deepened when strained across the steel-
 rimmed sea

For one white feather 'gainst its ebony!
The pennant of response to prayers and sighs,
 Swallows of Allah !

Swallows of Allah ! bearded men have wept,
 Waiting your advent from the silent sea,
 Maidens have pierced the minaret's mystery,
To watch the realms of the Frankish sept,
 Swallows of Allah !

Swallows of Allah ! now the royal sun
 Crests the high cliffs that overhang the sea ;
 The snows are melted, and the shadows
 flee,
The white flowers star the meadows one by one,
 Swallows of Allah !

Swallows of Allah ! bulbuls sing at night,
 We hear your voices from the siren sea ;
 The crescent shines above the silvered lea,
And all is music in the pale moonlight,
 Swallows of Allah !

Swallows of Allah

Swallows of Allah from the high mosque's tower,
Waking the dreams of the too slumbrous sea,
Peals the muezzin's voice of victory, —
The advent of your mercy and your power,
Swallows of Allah !

Swallows of Allah, keep your faithful tryst,
Here by the shallows of the tideless sea,
The Moslem shall not fail in courtesy ;
We have our Prophet — keep your gentle Christ,
Swallows of Allah !

Swallows of Allah ! beat with buoyant wings
The slumbers of the too reluctant sea ;
Come to us ! Come to us ! lo ! we cry for ye !
The largess of your woman's minist'rings,
Swallows of Allah !

COSETTE

COSETTE

A CROSS the gray sands of Dinan,
Cosette !

Comest thou, bird of sea and song,
Cosette !

Thy hair-cloud streaming far behind,
Vexed by the teasing, amorous wind,
Light in thy laughing eyes, and kind,
Cosette !

Where art thou now? On what far brink,
Cosette !

Of life's wild waves, that swell and sink?
Cosette !

Dead is the spring of nimble feet,
Dull are thine eyes' glad fires, and fleet,
And silvered age thy youth must greet,
Cosette !

Back, Fancy ! and let Memory paint
Cosette !

Hers are the lines most true, tho' faint,
Cosette !

Cithara Mea

Child wert thou then ! Child art thou now !
Life's dawn upon thy shining brow ;
Woman and wise ? God disallow !
Cosette !

Across the gray sands of Dinan,
Cosette !
The white waves crooning to my song,
Cosette !
Here where the sands and surges meet,
I see the print of dimpled feet,
Wet with my tears, so bitter sweet,
Cosette !

Nay ! let me see thee as afar,
Cosette !
Above the floor of yonder star,
Cosette !
When we shall meet in halls of heaven,
Beyond those peaks with sorrow riven,
Let me behold my child of seven,
Cosette !

THALASSA! O THALASSA!

THALASSA ! O THALASSA !

CAN you see the spine of yonder crest
Curved o'er the hillside lea ?
Well, there the sun halts as he creeps to rest ;
And beyond is the sea.
And beyond is the sea ! Have you seen the sea ?
Never ! Dear Lord, you were never born, —
Never seen the sea, and its mystery,
And the gates of the Night and the Morn !

Ay, I have seen it, and memory
(For I was not always blind)
Paints on my darkened eyes the sea ;
Here hath my God been kind.
Here hath my God been kind, for a wish
Summons the magic view,
And my ears lean down to the thunder and swish,
And the scream of the wild sea-mew.

Over the breakers that curl and toss
Their manes as they sweep along,
Till the foam of their crests is a silken floss
Green valleys among ;

Cithara Mea

Green valleys among the white gull flits,
And his strong gray pinion dips,
And rocked on the breakers the diver sits,
The spume of the sea on his lips.

Do I dream, or is that the music of life
That bids me look up and rejoice?
For Nature's at best is a silent strife,
Yet she needs a voice.
She needs a voice, else why does she draw
The bolts of the caverned wind,
And let him sweep on, without leash or law,
Trailing her seas behind?

Hark! to the thunder that shakes the ground,
Where the speckled sand-larks flee;
Were I dead, my heart would leap at the sound
And the scents of the sea,
And the scents of the sea, borne inland afar
Over the gorse and the heath,
My soul would leap through the gates ajar,
And the gray, grim portals of death.

Can you see aught yet? "Nought yet!" Look afar,
For the sea is alive and strong;
"Nought but the spray of one bright star
Its peers among.

Thalassa ! O Thalassa !

Its peers among, and set in the curve
Where the sun sinks to rest ;
And a long, long line with never a swerve
From the East to the West."

You must be deceived, for the sounds and the
scents

Of the great baptismal wave,
Poured from the Godhead's affluence,
My senses lave.
My senses lave. If mine eyes are blind,
My veins are filled as with wine,
My hair is teased by the salt sea wind,
And my lips are kissed with his brine.

Look again and long, for I feel as a friend
Hath his hand locked in mine ;
Look long, where the shadows gather and blend
At the day's decline.
"At the day's decline, vast meadows are green,
White swallows over them flee ;"
Child, O my Child, thine eyes are keen !
Meadows? Why, that 's the sea.

ABOVE THE BRIDGE

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ABOVE THE BRIDGE

IN low melodious laughter, as a child's,
The brook leaps out from the green clust'ring
ferns,

Tosses to eddying whirlpools, that foam
In silver rings, which circle round and round ;
And some, caught in the current's arms, are rolled
On to the ferns' crippled hands, and some
Float upon tranquil levels ; the lanced leaves
Of ash-trees bend them downward, as to seek
In fruitless yearnings the cool, healthful wave.
One hidden bird, tempted by silence, breaks
Into a rapture of sweet sounds and sighs,
As if an Oread, left from ancient times,
When all the gods had perished, and the groves
Were widowed of their haunting deities,
Tired and despairing of her loveless hills,
That mocked at her for all her vanished mates,
Should swoop to the dim twilight of the grove,
Call and re-call to woodland and to stream
The Orphic echoes that of old did break
From mountain wall in shivered resonance ;
And borne by winds of music, harps of air,
Sang down the Olympian valleys, and were lost
In the vast music of the mystic sea.

VALETE CAMCENÆ

VALETE CAMCENÆ

I TRAVAILED for souls of men, and, behold !
They gibbered and gibed at me.
I piped in the market-place for gold ;
They danced to my minstrelsy.

For the meed of a preacher is ever a laugh,
And the fingers fretting the dial,
To measure the moments, that light as chaff
Are flung from the dance and the viol.

From the North, from the South, from the West,
they trend, —
The shades of my phantom choir ;
And one sings " Master," and one says " Friend ; "
And many, sullenly, " Liar ! "

There is corn for the kine ; there is grist for the
mill,
And a coin for the scribe ;
But how shall he value it? Just as you will, —
A helot's wage, or a bribe.

But " the shallows murmur, and deeps are dumb."
Lift the plume from thy crest ;
Take this for thy motto — Then say, O come !
O Soul ! be thou silent and rest !

A PROPHECY

A PROPHECY

O IRELAND, dark-hooded in sea-fog and
mist

And thy feet lapped around by the pitiless sea,
And thy harpstrings, broken and trailed in the
wind,

And thy fangless watch-hound, looking afar ;
The white of thy forehead is smitten with signs,
Not the seals of the quick, as thy father Phœnicians
bore,

But dark cicatrized with the time wounds and pain,
Which fester, but gleam with a light and a hope,
Who speaketh of thee ?

Flotsam and waif on Time's dreary sea,
In faded gold the mariners read afar
Thy name, and think of old-time legends,
But deem thee unworthy to pick up or save ;
Derelict of Ocean ; its tumultuous throngs
Shuttles that weave betwixt the old and new,
Weaving the warp and woof of mighty empires,
Thou alone untouched, as plague-stricken,
Who careth for thee ?

Cithara Mea

Gray, dead hands point from out thy well-filled
 graves,

Stately thy turrets, that tremble not, nor break ;
Though lichened crosses lean with weight of years
And stretch them listless through the dust-strewn
 grass ;

And thou a leaf from the black-lettered past
Of vanished chivalry, swiftly vanished faiths?

But, for it hurts the eye to study thee,
The soul to watch thy illustrations dread,

Men turn from thee.

Wizards in thy valleys, ghosts in thy lofty towers,

Gray keeps o'erhanging lonely, inky lakes ;

Spirits clank up the green and granite stairs

That lead from seawash to enchanted moat.

Art thou enchanted? Smitten into stone

By some fell wizard in a far-off time?

And the puissant word that melts or wakes

From gloomy trance and staring impotence,

Who 'll speak to thee?

Are thy transgressions wreathed round thy head?

Do they come up, and fall upon thy neck?

Hath God poured out his fury like to fire?

And set thee in dark places, like the dead?

A Prophecy

Wounded to death, like some poor, timorous thing,
Seekest thou sepulchres of slime and dust?
To hide thy head, and nurse thy mortal hurt,
And let thy memory pass from living men,
Who shudder at thee.

And yet one child of thine will prophesy,
Not smitten with a pythoness's rage,
But watching the unrolling of the scroll,
That Time, God's child, is stealing from God's
hand;
Thou, the Elect, for thou hast passed through
fire;
Thou, the encrowned, for thou hast tasted woe,
Thou shalt yet speak, and all the world will hear;
And all, with foreheads drooped and downcast
eyes,
Shall haste to thy beck, O Sibyl of the Seas,
And worship thee!

SONNETS

A THUNDERSTORM AT BINGEN

THE dying sun had sucked his last red beam
From the drunk vine, whose long,
dishevelled tress

Leaned as in maudlin madness to caress
The childlike waves of the great, haunted stream ;

Then through the sudden darkness tore the scream
And snarl of thunder ; and the choking stress
Made of the midnight all a wilderness,
Lit by the torches of the lightning's gleam.

And, lo ! o'er slumbering village rose the crest
Of shattered keeps that in the magic flash
Assumed the might and mien of ancient power ;
And from their walls by leaguering hosts oppressed,
The mailed and vanquished knights did leap
and dash
Into the Lethe of the storm and hour.

AT THE RHINEFALLS (SCHAFFHAUSEN)

O STATELY river winding to the sea,
Deep-bayed and solemn for the centuries,
That gaze upon thee with their dreaming eyes
From shattered keep and empty hostelry ;

Here in thy riot of lusty infancy,
Heedless and unrebukéd by the wise,
Who cast the dark gray shadow of surmise
Of what a turbid future stores for thee,

Ay ! leap and dance and curvet o'er these stones,
That dare to thwart thy progress and thy pride ;
Stately and slow and solemn shalt thou move,
Thy high song lowered to the dread monotones
Of war's loud clangor, or the rippling tide
Of music breathed from harps of Wine and Love.

AN ORGAN-RECITAL (LUCERNE)

I HAVE beheld Nature and Art at war ;
For on this summer eve the thunder pealed
Where the Pilatus threatening raised his steeled
And crested helmet o'er the smoking bar,
That wreathed its rival column from afar,
And in its snowy crevices revealed
Its glowing emulation field on field,
Of thick mists, lighted by the lightning's star.

And here the mighty building rocked and heaved
Under the organ's thunders that awoke
Beneath the fingers of the silent one.
And the rain hissed as we had fain believed,
And the pines crashed beneath the lightning's
stroke,
And the fear-stricken hunters shriek and run.

THE MER-DE-GLACE

HITHER God brought His rebel seas to try
How high His wrath could lash them,
unrelieved

By sinking spaces or by lowering sky ;
But they, by loftiest altitudes deceived,
Leaped to his lash as if they fain believed
They too could sweep his skies, and there decry
His mandate when the smoking altars heaved
And sullen waters left the hill-tops dry.

But he, resenting such Titanic pride,
Transfixed them in columnar ice and stone,
Leaving vast valleys in their solitude.
There till the scythes of the last lava-tide
Shall level all things, all proud things dethrone,
The spirits of those Stylites dream and brood.

THE "VOX HUMANA"

WE tired of surging cataracts of sound,
That broke from loosened stop and
fretted keys,
And poured their cadences without surcease,
And made the mountain thunders peal around.

When, 'mid the hissing of the rain deluge drowned,
Lo ! from the depths of Alpine crevices
Came the faint cry of horror and distress
Of lonely chamois-hunter tempest-bound.

O great interpreter ! Nature hast thou shamed.
We woke amid the horrors of thy Erebus
To that one cry that ever touches us.
In the vast organ-music she has framed,
Her noblest stops for us are idly stirred,
Until she wakes the one great human chord.

TO S. M. S.

I NEVER knew thee, child ; but this I knew :
Thou camest from starred spaces to this
world

With all thy spirit faculties unfurled,
And thy great sponsor, music, promptly drew
From his large repertory, faultless, true,
A welcome from thy father, poet-herald
Of May, and pink May-blossoms lightly curled
To hold the chaliced sweetness of the dew.

And thou, the heiress of his wealth of song,
Poured all thy gold in streams of liquid light,
Doubly refined by all thy faith and love.
Lest thou shouldst cheat the vast expectant throng
Of one fine slender note, one music mite,
Singing thou soarest to the choirs above.

THE LAMP OF THE SANCTUARY

LORD ! Thou hast kindled all Thy lamps to-
night

For me, the lowliest parasite on earth ;
Thy voice gave utterance, Thy will gave birth
To all these streaming galaxies of light.
If Thy creative word can thus delight
One who forever travails from the dearth
Of love and knowledge, midst the boundless
girth
That wraps Thee formless in the infinite.

Let me be generous with Thee, dear Lord !
Let me enkindle one bright lamp for Thee ;
Light for the Light, the true Incarnate Word,
A feeble flame for burning ecstasy.
Seest thou, blind to star and glowing sun,
This lamp that burns before thine exiled One ?

THE SONNET

I PUT my trembling bird with down-drooped
wing

Within a golden cage that hung before
The Muse's temple ; closed the clanging door,
And stept aside, silent, and wondering
Whether the captive minstrel soul would sing,
She whose aspiring fancy fain would soar
To the far Pisgah heights whose altars bore
Traces of the lordliest poets' ministering.

And, lo ! the rough-hewn prison bars did glow
Into a golden lyre serenely strung,
And o'er their quivering chords did sweetly flow
The wavelets of an echo, swiftly sprung
From the imprisoned rage, the frenzied glow,
For here hath Milton, here hath Petrarch sung.

THIRZA

THIRZA

Midnight. At the gate of the King's gardens.

TO thy gardens of spice, O my Father, my
King!

I will come in the dawning of day unto thee.

I will peer through the lattice and trellis of leaves,

I will wound all my feet with the spears of the
thorns,

And my hands with the swords of the cactus'
white spines ;

I will whisper thy name to the cheek of the rose,

The shy foolish roses that blush with delight,

Or a pain of unrest when a breeze flutters by.

I will call thee and startle the sleeping of birds,

And bend the long thread of the fountain of pearls.

Shall I find thee asleep and the seal on thine eyes,

Where the blue veins entangle in ivoried lids?

Shall I find thee awake and a dawn of surprise

Just lighting the amber wine-lakes of thine eyes?

Wilt thou rise to bid welcome and hail to my soul?

Wilt thou pity my weakness and bind the bruised
feet,

And stain thy white fingers with rubies of blood?

Cithara Mea

Wilt thou call on thy heralds and servitors here,
The black and rude Ethiops, who bend at thy
beck,
And name thee their king? Thou hast purchased
their souls.
Wilt thou bid them bow down to their mistress
and queen?
Wilt thou take my white hand — it is whiter than
thine,
For thine shall be stained with my rubies of
blood, —
And down the dim aisles, interlaced with the
vines, —
The vines that are curled like thy hair, and the
tint
Of whose grapes is so like the dark wine of thine
eyes —
Shall we walk in the dawn, in the day, in the
night,
Where no time shall diminish the strength of our
Love?

VOICES OF THE NIGHT

Get thee back ! get thee back !
Forsworn and perjured One !
Get thee back ! get thee back !
To thy lord, to thy God, the Sun !

Thirza

Did we not see thee at noontide of night
Stabbing its sable with spears of the light,
Kindled at feet of Astarte, the Queen?
Lest the flame of his face, of his garments the
 sheen
Should be lost in the mourning of midnight,
 withdrawn
From dusk of the twilight to dusk of the dawn.
Thou couldst not endure that the darkness should
 mourn
The death of thy God, as he passed to the bourne,
Sepulchred to white resurrection of day.
Get thee back! get thee back! to thy vestal
 display.

THIRZA

I know ye not, ye voices of the night!
I only know ye do not speak for him,
Who hath espoused me in his royal love,
That draws me as on wheels of cherubim.
From my mother's kisses hath he weaned me,
Lo! his ring on my third finger gleaming!
From my father's house hath he enticed me,
Lo! his white pearls on my bosom streaming!
Were he sleeping my footfall would awaken;
Were he dead my lightest words that falter
On the threshold of my lips would arrest him,

Cithara Mea

Call his soul back from the shadows to exalt
her,
Who giveth redness to his mouth for her welcome,
And light unto his eyes for her gladness,
Who chaseth back the shadows that encompass,
And sweeteneth the myrrh chalice of his sadness.

VOICES OF THE NIGHT

Get thee back ! get thee back !
Why trespasses thou on his sleep ?
Get thee back ! get thee back !
Lest the fires of his wrath should upleap !

Where on the tapestried walls were writ
Scrolls of the abominations that flit
In the brown air of Sheol—the red creeping
things,
And the idols that stare with their dumb up-
liftings,
Have we not seen thee to kneel and bend low,
Secretly dropping the fragrance to flow
Up from the censers of worshippers pale,
'Fore the face of the God? 'Fore the spirits that
wail
O'er the lost souls of men, and the dread of their
fate,
We saw thee in tears ; we saw thee prostrate !

Thirza

THIRZA

I know not why you utter these reproaches ;
I shall not answer your thrice bitter words ;
My secret, the King's secret, to myself !
He alone shall waken my soul's chords.
Should he rise in anger dire, to smite me,
Lift his hands before his burning face,
Call his angels from his garden to expel me,
I should neither weep nor clamor for his grace.
Only I should pass amongst the shadows
Of my desolation made more desolate,
In the deserts of the world, and their darkness,
Hiding nought, but mindful of his hate.
Where is he, the fairest son of morning?
Have ye hidden him? O ! look on my distress !
Are ye spirits? have ye human hearts to pity
One who fainteth for the sweets of his caress?

VOICES OF THE NIGHT

Get thee back ! get thee back !
Thou vestal of death !
Get thee back ! get thee back !
From the flame of his breath !

Didst thou not weep for Thammuz in the porch
Facing the north where the ice winds scorch?
Thy head covered and thy hair dishevelled,

Cithara Mea

Where the soft fingers of thy god had revelled?
Thy god has passed the river in the night,
His wounds have reddened all the waters bright,
Passed like a weed unto the open sea ;
Evil hath fallen on thy god and thee,
Like to the fiery flakes that slow descend.
For thee no potent god, no pitying friend !

THIRZA

My God hath never passed into the bosom
Of night, or Ocean's sterile wastes outspread,
He is hidden in the copses, in the arbors,
The palm-tree cools the night air o'er his head.
There is one pallid rose beneath his forehead,
The curl of the vine laps round his feet,
What know ye of Astarte or Adonis,
Their names stain the sweetness of his retreat?
All the frankincense of Araby I would burn,
All the purple of sea-cities I would bring,
To bathe in sweetest fragrance his forehead,
To drape in richest royalty my King.

VOICES OF THE NIGHT

Get thee back ! get thee back !
Sibyl and Pythoness !
Get thee back ! get thee back !
From the King's duress.

Thirza

Hast thou not taken his silver and gold,
By cunning of thy plastic fingers rolled
Into lewd idols of thy dark despair,
That mock thee with their silent eyes, and stare
At thy most foolish worship, and the stress

Of thy most foolish weepings and distress?
Ay ! make of the King's gold a shining plate,
The envy of thy Lord, the Sun, to sate.
Here hast thou no place with the crownéd King,
Crowned for thy shame, sceptred with dishonoring.

THIRZA

Again you upbraid me, voices of the night !
Yon starry trance of the dark heavens bent,
By its mute worship and its quivering lamps,
Seems in some dreadful silence to assent ;
And from the twilight of the garden trees
Comes not a murmured whisper unto me.
Sleep, or forgetfulness, or death is there ;
Farewell, my King ! a long farewell to thee !
Bend not, ye silent grasses, 'neath my feet :
Hopeful I came ; despairing I depart ;
Break forth, thou Rose of blood again, and draw
The fountains of my wrecked and broken heart.
Before me is the desert, and behind
Maledictions on the night air float ;

Cithara Mea

I touch a wall of blackness, and my soul
Sinks to the gloomy horror of that moat,
Where lie of earth and heaven rejected souls,
And the dread knell of Orcus ever tolls.

THE BELOVED

In the desert. Just before the dawn.

What form is sheathed in the paling darkness?
What accents make the lids of night to shake?
What virgin's soul has donned the pilgrim's
sandals?

Hath wounded all her beauty for his sake?

THIRZA

Nay, Ignotus ! no pilgrim, but an outcast,
Disinherited, dishonored, I must roam
Through the wilderness of sin and of sorrow,
To find 'mongst heaven's exiled ones my home.

THE BELOVED

Why not seek then the King in his pavilions?
He hath mercy on all who greatly need ;
He hath comfort for the stricken and the sinner ;
He hath ears open wide to all who plead.

THIRZA

All the night have I waited at his portals ;
I have cried, but my prayers have sunk like lead
In the pathless waste of ocean highways ;
He was silent as the graves that grasp their dead.

Thirza

THE BELOVED

All the night he hath sought thee in the shadows,
His heart hath wept aloud for thy voice ;
He hath stepped from his high throne to greet
thee,
To hail thee Queen, and Empress of his choice.

THIRZA

Like the first faint stirring in the forest
When the restless breezes wake the bird ;
Like the first outpourings of gladness
When the footfalls of the dawn are heard.
Like the first fresh Hail ! unto the heavens
From the Ocean that has mourned all night,
Comes thy voice o'er the seas of my sorrows,
To herald the oncoming of the Light.
Lo ! the hearthstones of the eastern mountains
Smoke redly from th' enkindled day ;
Lo ! thy form grows dim against the background,
Where the ghosts of the night fade away.
Break away, ye ling'ring mists of morning,
Fold your tents and glide o'er yonder hills,
Let me hear the voice of my Beloved,
Silver-toned as of a thousand rills.
Oh, ye spirits, draw aside the curtains !
Stars of night, descend into the sea !
Let me see the face of my Beloved,

Cithara Mea

In what places is he hid from me ?
And thou ! O Herald of the morning,
Precursor and prophet of my Lord,
Linger not, I pray thee ; lead me to him,
My soul hangs trembling on thy word.

THE BELOVED

Wouldst thou know him amongst the earth's
children ?
Were his beauty marred and spoiled by men ?
Thorn-crowned, sceptre-stricken, gyved and fet-
tered,
When thou seest, thou 'lt reject him once again !

THIRZA

Why thus recall my hidden sin so cruelly ?
Doth not love retrieve the burning shame ?
Shall my love unreturned be unremembered ?
I have borne all the burden and the blame.
'T is not the ruddy, but the livid face I follow ;
Here I pillow the thorn-crowned Head ;
I would shame the silent saint of Magdala,
When she woke and saw her vision 'mongst the
dead.
Ah ! I fear my Lord hath never sent thee ;
He would come to me and stretch forth His
hands ;

Thirza

He would draw me to His bosom as His lost one ;
Love is all the retribution He demands.
O artist of the dawn ! brush from thy palette
The gleaming of thy silvers and thy golds ;
Draw down, starry night ! once more thy curtains,
Let me hide my burning face in their folds.

THE BELOVED

Thirza !

THIRZA

Who called ?

THE BELOVED

Thirza, dost thou not know
The face of thy Beloved 'gainst the Eastern glow ?

THIRZA

Call me once more ! Hush, every clamorous bird !
Hush, O my beating heart, for this one word !

THE BELOVED

Thirza !

THIRZA

Once more ! Be silent, O ye restless stars !
The shadow of a whisper from my love debars !

THE BELOVED

Thirza !

Cithara Mea

THIRZA

Once more ! It cannot be. He was asleep
There where the lilies to the night winds weep ;
And yet the secret thrill bids me rejoice,
Like light's first murmur from the quickening
voice.

THE BELOVED

Thirza !

THIRZA

Rabboni !



